





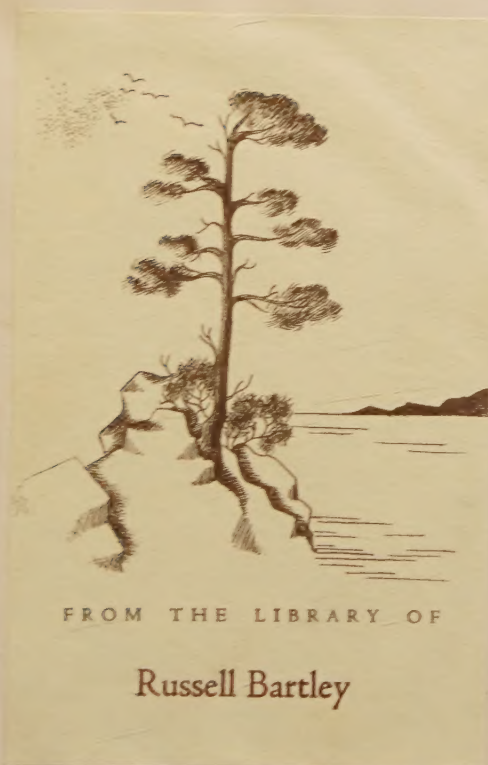
MENDOCINO COUNTY LIBRARY



3 6363 00136 768 9

WITHDRAWN

FORT BRAGO BRANCH LIBRARY



FROM THE LIBRARY OF

Russell Bartley

SEP 29 1988 7

C.2  
30<sup>00</sup>

B Pennell  
WHIST- Life of James  
LER, McNeill Whistler.  
J v.1

B  
WHIST-  
LER,  
J

C.7  
Pennell, Elizabeth Robins, 1855-1936.  
The life of James McNeill Whistler,  
by E.R. and J. Pennell. London, W.  
Heinemann; Philadelphia, J.B.  
Lippincott, 1909.

2 v. fronts., illus., plates (part  
col.) ports., facsims. 27 cm.

"First printed October 1908, second  
edition December 1908, third edition  
February 1909, fourth edition July  
1909."

1. Whistler, James McNeill, 1834-1903  
I. Pennell, Joseph, 1857-1926, joint  
author. II. Title

16 FEB 90

484214 NOBExc

19-8437

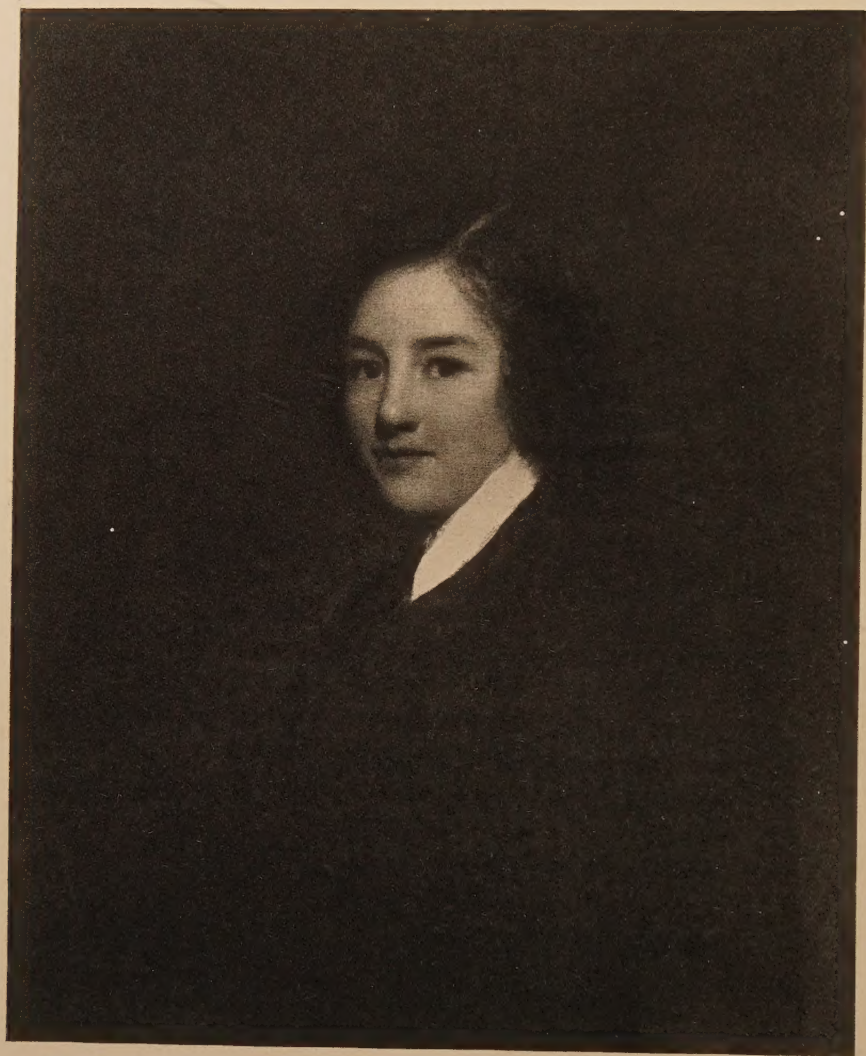




**THE LIFE OF JAMES  
McNEILL WHISTLER**









PORTRAIT OF WHISTLER AS A BOY  
By SIR WILLIAM BOXALL

# THE LIFE OF JAMES McNEILL WHISTLER

BY

E. R. AND J. PENNELL

IN TWO VOLUMES

ILLUSTRATED

VOLUME I

PHILADELPHIA

J. B. LIPPINCOTT COMPANY

LONDON: WILLIAM HEINEMANN

1909

*First Printed October 1908*  
*Second Impression December 1908*  
*Third Impression February 1909*

*Printed in England*

## PREFACE

OUR debt is large to the many who have aided us in preparing our *Life of Whistler*. His sister Lady Haden, his sister-in-law Mrs. William Whistler, his niece Mrs. Charles Thynne, his cousins Mrs. Dr. Stanton and Miss Emma W. Palmer have kindly supplied us with much information that only his family could give, and have allowed us to consult family papers. Friends of his earliest years have come to our assistance: Mr. George Lucas, Mrs. Kate Livermore, and, after her death in 1906, her daughter Mrs. S. P. Sutton, Miss Emily Chapman, Mr. Delmar Morgan (who knew the Whistlers in St. Petersburg), Mr. Theodore L. Harrison (whose father was associated with Major Whistler in his engineering work in Russia), the late Mrs. Louise Chandler Moulton, Mr. Frederick B. Miles of Baltimore, Mr. Henry Labouchere. Nothing could exceed the courtesy of Whistler's old classmates, their representatives and officers now at West Point: Col. C. W. Larned (who procured for us the official record, sent us numerous details of interest, lists of names and addresses, and answered our every appeal), Dr. E. Holden, the Librarian at the Military Academy, Gen. Loomis L. Langdon, Gen. C. B. Comstock, Gen. Henry L. Abbot, Gen. O. O. Howard, Gen. D. McM. Gregg, Gen. G. W. C. Lee, Major Zalinski, Major H. H. Benham, Captain Joseph Wheeler, Mr. Thomas Childs. Old comrades of Whistler's days in Paris have been as considerate: Mr. Luke Ionides (then and always Whistler's friend, who has spared himself no trouble for our benefit), Mr. Thomas

## PREFACE

Armstrong, Mr. Joseph Rowley, M. Carolus-Duran, Félix Bracquemond, M. Henri Oulevey, Charles Drouet (the sculptor, who died only just before our book was finished and whose legacy of Whistler's *Old Man Smoking* to the Luxembourg has been announced since it went to press). Friends of the first London days have been no less generous : Mr. W. M. Rossetti (who searched his papers for us, wrote his impressions, and made many notes), Miss Greaves, Mr. Walter Greaves, Lord Redesdale, Mr. George Meredith, Mr. Fred. Jameson, Mr. Arthur Severn, Mr. Percy Thomas. We are also indebted to the directors and officials of various Academies, Galleries and Societies with which Whistler was associated in one way or another : the authorities of the Imperial Academy of Science at St. Petersburg, Mr. Sidney Colvin and Mr. Campbell Dodgson of the British Museum, Mr. E. F. Strange of the Victoria and Albert Museum, Sir Richard R. Holmes, late Librarian at Windsor Castle, Heer B. W. F. van Riemsdijk, Curator of the Rijks Museum at Amsterdam, Mr. William H. Goodyear, Curator of Fine Arts at the Brooklyn Museum, the Glasgow Corporation, Sir Walter Armstrong of the National Gallery of Ireland, Mr. T. W. Lyster of the National Library of Ireland, Mr. Alfred East, Mr. Watt Cafe and Mr. Carew Martin of the Royal Society of British Artists, Mr. John Lavery, Mr. T Stirling Lee and Dr. C. Bakker of the International Society of Sculptors, Painters and Gravers, Mr. Francis Bate of the New English Art Club, Dr. Norman Moore and Dr. Edward Liveing, Registrar, of the Royal College of Physicians, Mr. Holker Abbott, President of the Copley Society in Boston.

The sympathetic co-operation of artists is a tribute Whistler would have appreciated : Mr. Edwin A. Abbey, Mr. Otto Bacher, Mr. and Mrs. Clifford Addams (Whistler's devoted pupils and apprentices), Mr. John W. Alexander, Miss Nelia Casella, Miss A. M. Chambers, Mr. William M.

## PREFACE

Chase, Mr. J. E. Christie, Mr. Timothy Cole, Mr. Walter Crane, Mr. Ralph Curtis, Mr. F. Morley Fletcher, Mr. Walter Gay, Mr. T. C. Gotch, Mr. William Graham, Mr. George R. Halkett, Mr. J. McLure Hamilton, Mr. Alexander Harrison, Mr. George A. Holmes, Mr. W. Ayerst Ingram, Mr. G. P. Jacomb-Hood, Mr. Francis James, Mr. J. Kerr-Lawson, Mr. E. Lantéri, Hon. Frederick Lawless, Mr. Frederick Mac-Monnies, Mr. Mortimer Menpes, Mrs. Anna Lea Merritt, Mr. Harper Pennington, M. Rodin, Mr. Theodore Roussel, Mr. John S. Sargent, Professor G. Sauter, Mr. Frank Short, Mr. Sidney Starr, Mrs. Stillman, Mr. E. A. Walton, Mr. T. R. Way, Mr. J. Alden Weir, Mr. Henry Woods, Mr. E. H. Wuerpel.

We can do no more than give the names of those to whom we are debtors in various other ways, to some for important facts or loans, to others for a few words illuminating a certain subject or period: Mr. W. C. Alexander, Mrs. George Boughton, Mr. Ernest G. Brown, Mr. Alan S. Cole (who placed his diary in our hands, with a generosity for which we cannot be too grateful, so invaluable is it as a record of years before we knew Whistler, when dates are difficult to fix and his movements to follow), Lady Archibald Campbell, Lady Colin Campbell, Mr. Fitzroy Carrington, Mrs. D'Oyly Carte, the late Dr. Moncure D. Conway, Mr. J. J. Cowan, Mr. S. R. Crockett, Rev. R. W. Davies, Mr. Randall Davies, Miss Annie Davis, Mr. Charles W. Deschamps, Mr. Walter Dowdeswell, M. Durand-Ruel, M. Théodore Duret (whose own book was never a check upon his liberality in helping us with ours), Mr. Fred. Eaton, Secretary of the Royal Academy, the late Mrs. Edwin Edwards, Messrs. Ellis, Mr. S. M. Fox, Mr. Albert E. Gallatin, Mrs. J. L. Gardner, Mr. Edmund Gosse, Mr. Frederick Goulding, Mr. Algernon Graves, M. Gérard Harry, Mr. J. P. Heseltine, Mr. E. J. Horniman, M.P., Mr. Samuel Hammond

## P R E F A C E

(who let us select from his interesting and, as far as we know, unrivalled series of early Whistler drawings), Mr. Charles Holme, Messrs. Houghton Mifflin Co., Mrs. Alfred Hunt, Miss Violet Hunt, Mr. Constant Huntington, Mr. E. G. Kennedy (and few have so intimate a knowledge of Whistler and his work), Mr. Frederick Keppel and Mr. David Keppel (who, with their partner Mr. FitzRoy Carrington, have gone to endless trouble in collecting material and verifying facts for us), Mr. Gustav Kobbé, Mr. O. O. Kyllmann, Lady Lewis, Mrs. Leyland, Mr. Lazenby Liberty, Mr. C. H. McCall, Mr. Howard Mansfield, Mr. William Marchant, Mr. Murray Marks, Mrs. Marzetti, Mrs. Lynedoch Moncrieff, Mr. Arthur Morrison, Mrs. Sydney Morse, Mrs. John Newmarch, Messrs. Obach, Mr. S. S. Pawling, Mr. W. Booth Pearsall, Mr. Bliss Perry, Editor of the *Atlantic Monthly*, M. Edmond Picard, Mr. W. G. Rawlinson, Mrs. Richmond Ritchie, Mrs. F. Robb, Sir Rennell Rodd, Mr. Robert Ross, Countess Rucellai, Mr. Malcolm S. Salaman, Mrs. Spring-Rice, Mr. A. Strahan, Sir Thomas Sutherland, Mr. Arthur Symons, the American Ambassador, Hon. Van L. Meyer and the Third Secretary of Legation Mr. Basil Miles, at St. Petersburg, Mr. H. S. Theobald, K.C., Mr. D. Croal Thomson (who has permitted us to consult his invaluable Whistler papers), Mr. and Mrs. T. Fisher Unwin, Mr. Emery Walker, Rev. Lionel J. Wallace (Vicar of Goring Church where the Whistlers lie buried), Mr. Pickford Waller (whose extraordinary collection of Whistleriana he entrusted to us while our work was in progress), Mrs. Westlake, Lord and Lady Wolseley, Dr. C. Hagberg Wright.

It is not easy when so many have been induced by their interest in Whistler or affection for him to help us, to explain just what each and every one has done. In a great number of cases the pages of our book will give some idea of the extent of our indebtedness, and at least we can say how deep

viii

## PREFACE

and sincere is our sense of obligation. One special word of thanks, however, we must add. To no one do we owe more than to our publisher, Mr. William Heinemann, who has drawn upon his own friendship with Whistler to enrich us, who has aided us with his counsel, worked with us through difficulties, and faced the not light task of reading our book in manuscript and proof, giving us the advantage of his criticism and advice.

JOSEPH PENNELL.

ELIZABETH ROBINS PENNELL.

3 ADELPHI TERRACE HOUSE,  
LONDON, W.C.



FIGURES

(Enlarged from "The Coast Survey," Plate No. 1.)

# CONTENTS

## INTRODUCTION

PAGE  
xxiii

## CHAPTER I. THE WHISTLER FAMILY. THE YEARS EIGHTEEN THIRTY-FOUR TO EIGHTEEN FORTY- THREE 1

*Whistler's Ancestors—His Parents—Birth—Early Years*

## CHAPTER II. IN RUSSIA. THE YEARS EIGHTEEN FORTY-THREE TO EIGHTEEN FORTY-NINE 11

*Life in Russia—Schooldays—Begins His Art Studies in the Imperial  
Academy of Fine Arts—Death of Major Whistler—Return to America*

## CHAPTER III. SCHOOL-DAYS IN POMFRET. THE YEARS EIGHTEEN FORTY-NINE TO EIGHTEEN FIFTY-ONE 26

*The Pomfret School and School-Mates—Early Drawings*

## CHAPTER IV. WEST POINT. THE YEARS EIGHTEEN FIFTY-ONE TO EIGHTEEN FIFTY-FOUR 30

*Whistler as Cadet in the U.S. Military Academy—His Studies—Failure  
—Stories Told of Him—His Estimate of West Point*

## CHAPTER V. THE COAST SURVEY. THE YEARS EIGHTEEN FIFTY-FOUR TO EIGHTEEN FIFTY-FIVE 39

*Life in Washington—Obtains Position as Draughtsman in the U.S. Coast  
and Geodetic Survey—First Plates—Resignation—Starts for Paris*

xi

## CONTENTS

	PAGE
CHAPTER VI. STUDENT DAYS IN THE LATIN QUARTER. THE YEARS EIGHTEEN FIFTY-FIVE TO EIGHTEEN FIFTY-NINE	48
<i>Arrival in Paris—Enters as Student at Gleyre's—His Fellow Students—Adventures—Journey to Alsace</i>	
CHAPTER VII. WORKING DAYS IN THE LATIN QUARTER. THE YEARS EIGHTEEN FIFTY-FIVE TO EIGHTEEN FIFTY-NINE CONTINUED	66
<i>His Studies—Work at the Louvre—Visit to Art Treasures Exhibition at Manchester—Etchings—Paintings—Rejection at the Salon and Exhibition in Bonvin's Studio</i>	
CHAPTER VIII. THE BEGINNINGS IN LONDON. THE YEARS EIGHTEEN FIFTY-NINE TO EIGHTEEN SIXTY-THREE	76
<i>In London with the Hadens—First appearance at Royal Academy—Kindness to French Fellow Students—Shares Studio with Du Maurier—Gaieties—Mr. Arthur Severn's Reminiscences—Work on the River—Joe—Etchings published by Mr. Edmund Thomas</i>	
CHAPTER IX. THE BEGINNINGS IN LONDON. THE YEARS EIGHTEEN FIFTY-NINE TO EIGHTEEN SIXTY-THREE CONTINUED	88
<i>Paintings and Exhibitions—The Music Room—Mr. Frederick Goulding on his Printing—Visits to Mr. and Mrs. Edwin Edwards—Summer in Brittany—"The White Girl"—Berners Street Gallery—Baudelaire on his Etchings—Illustrations—Salon des Refusés—First Gold Medal</i>	
CHAPTER X. CHELSEA DAYS. THE YEARS EIGHTEEN SIXTY-THREE TO EIGHTEEN SIXTY-SIX	106
<i>Settles with his Mother at No. 7 Lindsey Row, Chelsea—The Greaves Family—The Limerston Street Studio and Mr. J. E. Christie—Rossetti—The Tudor House Circle, Swinburne, Meredith, Frederick Sandys, Howell—"Blue and White"—W. M. Rossetti's Reminiscences</i>	

## CONTENTS

	PAGE
CHAPTER XI. CHELSEA DAYS. THE YEARS EIGHTEEN SIXTY-THREE TO EIGHTEEN SIXTY-SIX CONTINUED	121
<i>The Japanese Pictures—The "Princesse du Pays de la Porcelaine"—Japanese Influence—"The Little White Girl"—Fantin's "Homage à Delacroix"—"The Toast"—Arrival in London of Lr. Whistler—At Trouville with Courbet—Journey to Valparaiso</i>	
CHAPTER XII. CHELSEA DAYS CONTINUED. THE YEARS EIGHTEEN HUNDRED AND SIXTY-SIX TO EIGHTEEN HUNDRED AND SEVENTY-TWO	137
<i>Return to London—Removal to No. 2 Lindsey Row—The House and its Decorations—The 1867 Exhibition in Paris—Affair at the Burlington Fine Arts Club—"Symphony in White, No. III," the First Picture Exhibited as a Symphony—Theories—Development—Discouragement—Mr. Fred. Jameson's Reminiscences—Decoration—Hamerton's "Etching and Etchers"—Etchings and Dry-Points—Exhibitions—Rejection at the Royal Academy—First Exhibition of Picture as a Nocturne—Relations to the Royal Academy</i>	
CHAPTER XIII. NOCTURNES. THE YEARS EIGHTEEN SEVENTY-TWO TO EIGHTEEN SEVENTY-FOUR	161
<i>Nocturnes—Extent of Debt to Japanese—Methods and Materials—Subjects—Origin of Title—His Explanation in "The Gentle Art"</i>	
CHAPTER XIV. PORTRAITS. THE YEARS EIGHTEEN SEVENTY-TWO TO EIGHTEEN SEVENTY-FOUR	168
<i>"The Mother"—"Carlyle"—"Miss Alexander"—Mr. and Mrs. Leyland—Mrs. Louis Huth—Show of his own Work in Pall-Mall—Indignation Roused by His Titles</i>	
CHAPTER XV. THE OPEN DOOR. THE YEAR EIGHTEEN SEVENTY-FOUR AND AFTER	182
<i>Whistler's Gaiety and Hospitality—His Amusement in Society—His Dinners and Sunday Breakfasts—Reminiscences of his Entertainments—His Talk—Clubs—Restaurants—The Theatre</i>	

## CONTENTS

	PAGE
CHAPTER XVI. THE PEACOCK ROOM. THE YEARS EIGHTEEN SEVENTY-FOUR TO EIGHTEEN SEVENTY- SEVEN	198
<i>Work at Exhibitions and in the Studio—Portrait of Irving—"Rosa Corder"—"The Fur Jacket"—"Connie Gilchrist"—The Peacock Room—Mr. Leyland's House in Prince's Gate—Its Decoration— Whistler's Scheme for the Dining-Room and its Development—The Work Finished—Quarrel with Leyland</i>	
CHAPTER XVII. THE GROSVENOR GALLERY. THE YEARS EIGHTEEN SEVENTY-SEVEN TO EIGHTEEN SEVENTY-EIGHT	210
<i>Sir Coutt Lindsay's New Gallery—First Exhibition at the Grosvenor— Whistler's Contributions—Ruskin's Criticism of "The Falling Rocket" in "Fors Clavigera"—Whistler sues Him for Libel—Etchings— Lithographs—Drawings of Blue and White for Sir Henry Thompson's Catalogue—Caricatures—Sends a Second Time to the Grosvenor</i>	
CHAPTER XVIII. THE WHITE HOUSE. THE YEAR EIGHTEEN SEVENTY-EIGHT	219
<i>Paris Universal Exhibition of 1878—Harmony in Yellow and Gold—Whistler as Decorator—Lady Archibald Campbells's Appreciation —Plan of Opening an Atelier for Students—No. 2 Lindsey Row given up—E. W. Godwin Builds the White House for Him—His Mother's Health—She Leaves Him for Hastings—Money Difficulties—Mezzo- tints of the "Carlyle" and "Rosa Corder"</i>	
CHAPTER XIX. THE TRIAL. THE YEAR EIGHTEEN SEVENTY-EIGHT½	229
<i>Whistler's Reasons for the Action against Ruskin—His Position and Ruskin's compared—Refusal of Artists to Support Whistler—Trial in the Exchequer Chamber, Westminster—Verdict—The General Criticism —Mr. T. Armstrong and Mr. Arthur Severn on the Trial—Collection to pay Ruskin's Expenses—Failure to raise one for Whistler</i>	
CHAPTER XX. BANKRUPTCY. THE YEARS EIGHTEEN SEVENTY-EIGHT TO EIGHTEEN SEVENTY-NINE	246
<i>Caricatures and Comments—"Whistler v. Ruskin : Art and Art Critics" —Whistler again at the Grosvenor—His Critics—His Financial</i>	

## CONTENTS

	PAGE
<i>Embarrassments—His Manner of Meeting Them—Declared Bankrupt—“The Gold Scab”—Commission from the Fine Art Society for the Venetian Etchings—Starts for Venice—The Sale of the White House—Sale of Blue and White, Pictures, Prints, etc., at Sotheby’s</i>	
 CHAPTER XXI. VENICE. THE YEAR EIGHTEEN SEVENTY-NINE TO EIGHTEEN EIGHTY	261
<i>Whistler’s Arrival in Venice—First Impressions, Disappointments and Difficulties—His Friends in Venice and Their Memories of Him—Duveneck and his “Boys”—Whistler’s Hard Work—His Lodgings and Restaurants—The Cafés—Stories Told of Him—Reminiscences of Mr. Harper Pennington and Mr. Ralph Curtis</i>	
 CHAPTER XXII. VENICE. THE YEAR EIGHTEEN SEVENTY-NINE TO EIGHTEEN EIGHTY CONTINUED	276
<i>His Work in Venice—Pastels and his Methods—Etchings—Printing—Mr. Frank Short’s Appreciation of Him as Printer—Japanese Method of Drawing—Water-Colours and Paintings</i>	
 CHAPTER XXIII. BACK IN LONDON. THE YEARS EIGHTEEN EIGHTY TO EIGHTEEN EIGHTY-ONE	289
<i>Return to London and Sudden Appearance at Fine Art Society’s—Prints Venice Plates—Exhibition of “The Twelve” at the Fine Art Society’s—Exhibition of Venice Pastels—Decoration of Gallery—Bewilderment of Critics and the Public—Death of his Mother—“The Piker Papers”—The Portrait of his Mother Exhibited in Philadelphia—Etchings begin to be shown in America</i>	
 CHAPTER XXIV. THE JOY OF LIFE. THE YEARS EIGHTEEN EIGHTY-ONE TO EIGHTEEN EIGHTY-FOUR	300
<i>Takes a Studio at 13 Tite Street—His “Joyousness”—Letters to the Press—His “Amazing” Costumes—Portraits of Lady Meux—His Other Sitters—Mrs. Marzetti’s account of the painting of “The Blue Girl”—Lady Archibald Campbell’s Reminiscences of the Sitzings for her Portrait—Portrait of M. Duret—“The Paddon Papers”—Second Exhibition of Venice Etchings at the Fine Art Society’s—Excitement it Created—The “Carlyle” at Edinburgh—Proposal to buy it for Scottish National Portrait Gallery—Comes to nothing—Whistler Involved in a Church Congress</i>	



JOE  
(Dry-point)

## LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS

<b>PORTRAIT OF WHISTLER AS A BOY BY SIR WILLIAM BOXALL</b> <i>Frontispiece</i>	<i>To face page</i> 2
<b>DR. DANIEL WHISTLER (1619-1684)</b> From the painting in the Royal College of Physicians	2
<b>MAJOR GEORGE WASHINGTON WHISTLER (<i>Whistler's Father</i>)</b> By permission of Mrs. Dr. George D. Stanton and Miss Emma W. Palmer	4
<b>HOUSE IN WHICH WHISTLER WAS BORN, LOWELL, MASS.</b> From a photograph supplied by Mrs. Dr. George D. Stanton and Miss Emma W. Palmer	6
<b>OLD CORNER HOUSE, STONINGTON</b> From a photograph supplied by Mrs. Dr. George D. Stanton and Miss Emma W. Palmer	6
<b>ST. ANNE'S CHURCH, LOWELL, MASS.</b> From a photograph supplied by Mrs. Dr. George D. Stanton and Miss Emma W. Palmer	6
<b>DR. CHARLES DONALD MCNEILL (<i>done in Hair</i>)</b> From a miniature in the possession of Mrs. Dr. George D. Stanton and Miss Emma W. Palmer	8
<b>MRS. CHARLES DONALD MCNEILL</b> From a miniature in the possession of Mrs. Dr. George D. Stanton and Miss Emma W. Palmer	8
<b>MAJOR GEORGE WASHINGTON WHISTLER AS A YOUNG MAN (<i>Whistler's Father</i>)</b> From a miniature in the possession of Mrs. William Whistler	12
<b>MRS. GEORGE WASHINGTON WHISTLER (<i>Whistler's Mother</i>)</b> From a photograph in the possession of Mrs. Dr. George Stanton and Miss Emma W. Palmer	12
<b>THE TWO BROTHERS</b> From a miniature formerly in the possession of Mrs. Dr. George D. Stanton and Miss Emma W. Palmer	26

# LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS

	<i>To face page</i>
DRAWINGS MADE AT POMFRET ( <i>Pen and Ink</i> )	28
In the possession of Samuel Hammond, Esq.	
DRAWING MADE AT WEST POINT ( <i>Copy of a Print</i> ) ( <i>Pen and Ink</i> )	32
From the original at West Point by permission of Colonel C. W. Larned	
TITLE-PAGE OF GEOMETRY-BOOK, WITH PENCIL SKETCHES BY WHISTLER	34
In the possession of Thomas Childs, Esq.	
SAM WELLER'S LODGING IN THE FLEET PRISON ( <i>Water-Colour</i> )	36
In the possession of Mrs. William Whistler	
ON POST DUTY AT WEST POINT ( <i>An Encampment</i> ) ( <i>Wash Drawing</i> )	36
From the original at West Point by permission of Colonel C. W. Larned	
THE COAST SURVEY, No. 1 ( <i>Etching</i> )	44
COAST SURVEY, No. 2, ANACAPA ISLAND ( <i>Etching</i> )	44
By permission of the U.S. Coast and Geodetic Survey	
LA MÈRE GÉRARD	58
Formerly in the possession of A. C. Swinburne, Esq.	
TÊTE DE PAYSANNE	68
Now in the possession of Madame la Comtesse De Bearn	
DIANA AT THE POOL ( <i>Copy of a painting by Boucher</i> )	72
In the possession of Louis W. Winans, Esq.	
AT THE PIANO	76
In the possession of Edmund Davis, Esq.	
DESIGN FOR PROGRAMME BY DU MAURIER ( <i>Pen and Ink</i> )	84
In the possession of Mrs. John Newmarch	
WAPPING	88
In the possession of Mrs. Hutton	
THE MUSIC ROOM ( <i>Harmony in Green and Rose</i> )	90
Now in the possession of Colonel Frank Hecker	
THE COAST OF BRITTANY ( <i>Alone with the Tide</i> )	94
Formerly in the possession of Ross Winans, Esq.	
THE BLUE WAVE ( <i>Blue and Silver</i> )	94
Now in the possession of Alfred Attmore Pope, Esq.	
THE THAMES IN ICE ( <i>The 25th of December 1860, on the Thames</i> )	96
Now in the possession of C. L. Freer, Esq.	
ILLUSTRATIONS TO "THE FIRST SERMON" ( <i>From "Good Words"</i> ) ( <i>Wood-Engravings</i> )	98
In the possession of Harold Hartley, Esq.	

# LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS

ILLUSTRATIONS ( <i>from "Once a Week"</i> ) ( <i>Wood-Engravings</i> )	<i>To face</i> page 100
By permission of Messrs. Chatto and Windus	
SOUVENIR OF VELASQUEZ ( <i>Chalk Drawing</i> )	104
In the possession of H. Graves, Esq.	
LINDSEY ROW	108
From a photograph lent by Mrs. Sydney Morse	
NO. 7 LINDSEY ROW ( <i>First House</i> ) ( <i>Photograph</i> )	108
NO. 2 LINDSEY ROW ( <i>Second House</i> ) ( <i>Photograph</i> )	108
THE WHITE GIRL ( <i>Symphony in White, No. 1</i> )	112
Now in the possession of Harris Whittemore, Esq.	
ONE OF THE BOARD ( <i>Caricature made at West Point</i> ) ( <i>Pen and Pencil</i> )	116
In the possession of Thomas Childs, Esq.	
WEST POINT DRAWING ( <i>Wash</i> )	116
In the possession of Samuel Hammond, Esq.	
ON POST IN CAMP ( <i>Hours in the life of a Cadet</i> ) ( <i>Pen and Ink</i> )	120
From the originals at West Point by permission of Colonel C. W. Larned	
THE LANGE LEIZEN—OF THE SIX MARKS ( <i>Purple and Rose</i> )	122
Now in the possession of J. G. Johnson, Esq.	
HOMMAGE À DELACROIX ( <i>From the picture by Fantin-Latour. Salon, 1864</i> )	130
In the Moreau-Nélaton collection now at the Musée des Arts Décoratifs, Paris	
VALPARAISO ( <i>Nocturne, Blue and Gold</i> )	134
In the George McCulloch Collection	
VALPARAISO ( <i>Study for the large picture</i> )	134
Formerly in the possession of T. R. Way, Esq.	
STUDY OF BATTERSEA BRIDGE ( <i>Chalk Drawing</i> )	134
In the possession of H. J. Pollitt, Esq.	
PORTRAIT OF WHISTLER ( <i>Chalk Drawing</i> )	136
In the possession of T. Way, Esq.	
STUDIES IN BLACK AND WHITE CHALK ( <i>For the Six Projects</i> )	138
SEA-BEACH AND FIGURES ( <i>Pastel—Study for the Six Projects</i> )	140
STUDY OF NUDE ( <i>Chalk Drawing—Studies for the Six Projects</i> )	140
NUDE ( <i>Chalk Drawing—Study for the Six Projects</i> )	142
THE LILY ( <i>Pastel—Study for the Six Projects</i> )	142
DESIGN FOR A FAN ( <i>Water-colour—Study for the Six Projects</i> )	144
TILLIE : A MODEL ( <i>Dry-point—Study for the Six Projects</i> )	144
	xix

# LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS

	<i>To face page</i>
STUDIES FOR THE SIX PROJECTS ( <i>Chalk Drawings</i> )	146
SYMPHONY IN WHITE ( <i>No. III.</i> )	146
Now in the possession of Edmund Davis, Esq.	
THREE FIGURES ( <i>Pink and Grey</i> )	148
Now in the possession of Alfred Chapman, Esq.	
DESIGN FOR MOSAIC FOR SOUTH KENSINGTON MUSEUM ( <i>Pastel</i> )	150
Now in the possession of Graham Robertson, Esq.	
VARIATIONS IN VIOLET AND GREEN ( <i>In the Frame designed by Whistler</i> )	156
Now in the possession of Sir Charles M'Laren, Bt.	
NOCTURNE, BATTERSEA ( <i>Arrangement in Grey and Gold</i> )	162
In the Shakespeare Memorial Gallery, Stratford-on-Avon	
NOCTURNE ( <i>Blue and Green</i> )	162
Now in the possession of W. C. Alexander, Esq.	
CREMORNE, NO. I. ( <i>Nocturne</i> )	164
Now in the possession of Mrs. Argenti	
CREMORNE ( <i>Nocturne, in Green and Gold</i> )	164
In the Metropolitan Museum, New York	
OLD BATTERSEA BRIDGE ( <i>Nocturne Blue and Gold</i> )	166
In the Tate Gallery	
PORTRAIT OF THE PAINTER'S MOTHER ( <i>Arrangement in Grey and Black</i> )	168
In the Musée du Luxembourg	
SKETCH OF THE "CARLYLE" ( <i>Pen and Wash</i> )	170
PORTRAIT OF THOMAS CARLYLE ( <i>Arrangement in Grey and Black No. II.</i> )	170
In the Glasgow Gallery	
STUDY FOR HEAD OF CICELY H. ALEXANDER	172
In the possession of W. C. Alexander, Esq.	
PORTRAIT OF MISS CICELY HENRIETTA ALEXANDER ( <i>Harmony in Grey and Green</i> )	172
In the possession of W. C. Alexander, Esq.	
STUDIES FOR "THE BLUE GIRL" (MISS FLORENCE LEYLAND) ( <i>Pen and Ink</i> )	174
In the possession of W. C. Alexander, Esq.	
SKETCHES OF MISS CICELY H. AND MISS GRACE ALEXANDER ( <i>Pen and Ink</i> )	174
In the possession of W. C. Alexander, Esq.	

# LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS

	<i>To face page</i>
<b>PORTRAIT OF MRS. F. R. LEYLAND</b> ( <i>Symphony in Flesh Colour and Pink</i> ) In the possession of Mrs. F. R. Leyland	176
<b>PORTRAIT SKETCH OF F. R. LEYLAND</b> In the possession of Charles Conder, Esq.	178
<b>PORTRAIT OF F. R. LEYLAND</b> ( <i>Arrangement in Black</i> ) Now in the possession of C. L. Freer, Esq.	178
<b>PORTRAIT OF MRS. LOUIS HUTH</b> ( <i>Arrangement in Black No. II.</i> ) In the possession of Mrs. Louis Huth	180
<b>WHISTLER IN HIS STUDIO</b> Now in the possession of Douglas Freshfield, Esq.	184
<b>PORTRAIT OF LUKE A. IONIDES</b> In the possession of Luke A. Ionides, Esq.	188
<b>PORTRAIT OF WHISTLER WITH HAT</b> Now in the possession of C. L. Freer, Esq.	190
<b>LADY HADEN</b> ( <i>From a Photograph</i> )	192
<b>SKETCHES OF THE PEACOCK ROOM</b> ( <i>Pen and Ink</i> ) In the possession of Mrs. John L. Gardner	200
<b>THE PEACOCK ROOM</b> ( <i>Photograph</i> )	204
<b>THE PEACOCK ROOM</b> ( <i>Photograph</i> )	208
<b>SKETCHES FOR BLUE AND WHITE CHINA</b> ( <i>Wash Drawings</i> ) In the possession of Murray Marks, Esq.	216
<b>THE WHITE HOUSE, TITE STREET, CHELSEA</b> ( <i>Photograph</i> )	224
<b>THE TWO BROTHERS AS BOYS AND MEN</b> ( <i>Photographs</i> ) By permission of Mrs. William Whistler and W. M. Rossetti, Esq.	230
<b>THE FALLING ROCKET</b> ( <i>Nocturne in Black and Gold</i> ) Now in the possession of Mrs. Samuel Untermeyer	232
<b>NOCTURNE IN BLUE AND SILVER, No. 1</b> Now in the possession of Mrs. F. R. Leyland	236
<b>THE GOLD SCAB, OR ERUPTION IN FRILTHY LUCRE</b> Now in the possession of G. P. Jacomb Hood, Esq.	250
<b>SKETCH OF "CONNIE GILCHRIST"</b> ( <i>Pen and Wash</i> ) In the possession of Alan S. Cole, Esq.	258
<b>PORTRAIT OF MISS CONNIE GILCHRIST</b> ( <i>Harmony in Yellow and Gold, The Gold Girl</i> ) Formerly in the possession of H. Labouchere, Esq. (By permission of Messrs. Carfax)	258

## LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS

	<i>To face page</i>
ST. MARK'S ( <i>Nocturne, Blue and Gold</i> )	262
Now in the possession of J. J. Cowan, Esq.	
THE BASE OF THE TOWER, VENICE ( <i>Pastel</i> )	264
In the possession of J. P. Heseltine, Esq.	
CALLE, VENICE ( <i>Pastel</i> )	268
In the possession of J. P. Heseltine, Esq.	
MARBLE PALACE, VENICE ( <i>Pastel</i> )	278
In the possession of Thomas Way, Esq.	
ETCHING OF HENRY IRVING	288
PORTRAIT OF SIR HENRY IRVING AS PHILIP II. OF SPAIN ( <i>Arrangement in Black No. III.</i> )	288
Now in the possession of G. Thomas, Esq.	
SKETCH OF "ROSA CORDER" ( <i>Pen and Wash</i> )	296
In the possession of Alan S. Cole, Esq.	
PORTRAIT OF MISS ROSA CORDER ( <i>Arrangement in Black and Brown</i> )	296
Now in the possession of R. A. Canfield, Esq.	
THE YELLOW BUSKIN—PORTRAIT OF LADY ARCHIBALD CAMPBELL ( <i>Arrangement in Black</i> )	305
In the Wiltach Collection, Philadelphia	
PORTRAIT OF LADY MEUX ( <i>Arrangement in Black and White</i> )	308
in the possession of Lady Meux	

## ILLUSTRATIONS IN THE TEXT

	<i>Page</i>	<i>x</i>
FIGURES FROM THE COAST SURVEY, PLATE NO. I.	x	
JOE ( <i>Drypoint</i> )	xvi	
EARLY DRAWING OF A DUCK ( <i>Pencil</i> )	10	
By permission of Mrs. Sutton		
AUNT KATE ( <i>Pencil</i> )	25	
By permission of Mrs. Livermore		
ST. AUGUSTINE ( <i>Pen and Ink</i> )	29	
In the possession of Mrs. William Whistler		

*Note.*—When the medium in which the work is  
executed is not stated, it is in oil.

## INTRODUCTION

It was Whistler's belief that the artist, like art, "happens." But though his art lives so long as his work remains, the creator himself is forgotten, unless those who knew him tell what they know. Only the masters of the past who left records of their own lives, or who figure in the chronicles of their contemporaries, survive as more than names signed to their pictures or their prints. "Nobody can write the life of a man," Dr. Johnson said to Boswell, "but those who have eaten and drunk and lived in social intercourse with him." In the case of a nature so complex, so primitive, and yet so full of perplexing subtleties, as was Whistler's, in the case of an artist so persistently misunderstood, so long unrecognised, the constant, yet, unintentional, maker of "enemies," a faithful account of the real man as he appeared to his personal friends, of the supreme artist at his work, must be of value hereafter.

We had the privilege of seeing much of Whistler during his last years, and when he was giving us his reminiscences we came to know the Whistler we had never met—the Whistler of Lowell and St. Petersburg, Stonington and West Point, the Latin Quarter and Chelsea. As he talked to us, dates became more than dates, facts more than facts, and everything we learned from him seemed of importance in the record he asked us to write—the story of his life. We realised, at the same time, that everything we could learn from others concerning him was valuable, especially from

## INTRODUCTION

those who knew him well, and we have spared no pains to gather together all available information from his friends and from people whom work, or other interests, brought into close contact with him. It is our good fortune to have found for every period of his life some one qualified and willing to help us.

We have felt our responsibility the more because, as we undertook to write his biography at his request, we looked upon it after his death as a sacred trust, and still more because, in carrying out his wishes, we met with difficulties which neither he, nor we, could have foreseen. His friends have responded to our appeal with a sympathy, a generosity, it is not easy to overestimate. Practically, the only refusal to help in the fulfilment of his wishes, came from Whistler's heir and executrix, Miss Rosalind Birnie Philip, who not only withheld such assistance as she might have given us, but put serious hindrances in our way. As our story of Whistler's last years will show, his illness was an inevitable interruption to the book in which his enthusiasm equalled ours. He supplied us with a great deal of material and he recalled for us many facts about himself and his work, of which we took careful notes in his presence, or immediately after parting. His private correspondence would, unquestionably, have been devoted to our official biography, although in the absence of a signed agreement (the need for which under the intimate circumstances, we overlooked) we are restrained from reproducing his letters. We have felt this to be no light loss. We know from the many letters Whistler wrote to us, his charm as correspondent and the many others we have seen reveal the same gaiety in friendship and brilliancy of wit, also his perfect courtesy and consideration in business affairs of which there is small trace or hint in *The Gentle Art*, and his inexhaustible attention to every detail concerning his work. Hundreds of letters have been

## INTRODUCTION

placed at our disposal, and if only their substance is here embodied we hope we have at least given an idea of the freshness of his mind, the quickness of his wit and his readiness of expression.

Great as was our disappointment when Miss Birnie Philip declined to sanction the publication of Whistler's letters, we should never have made the fact public, had she not brought the matter into the law courts. It is known how easily we there established our authority, while Miss Birnie Philip clearly showed that the volume of letters which she and her sister, Mrs. Whibley, were authorised to issue was to be virtually on the lines of *The Gentle Art*, in the preparation of which Mrs. Whibley had helped. *The Gentle Art* contained nothing but letters and documents previously published—his public utterances in fact with occasional reflections and comments—but no private correspondence, so desirable in any biography. After Mr. Justice Kekewich had declared our authority conclusively proved, Mr. Heinemann made a further attempt to persuade Miss Birnie Philip to assist in the carrying out of Whistler's wishes. He was unfortunately not able to induce her to change her attitude, and it was left therefore for us to fulfil, unaided and to the best of our ability, the task which we had undertaken with no little apprehension seven years before. In the absence of the letters, the various contributions from Whistler's friends will go far, we hope, to counteract the impression that Whistler's name alone is sufficient to sow discord and arouse quarrels. These friends may differ as to the qualities of his art, of his wit, of his personality, but they agree in their memory of him as a man to whom affection was natural, who was a good companion, and the best of friends until he was provoked into "making enemies." Some of their impressions may seem a contradiction to others because of differences in detail, but we print them all

## INTRODUCTION

as they are, and as a rule without comment, because, in their sincerity, they must contribute to a better knowledge and truer appreciation of Whistler than if an endeavour were made to reduce them to uniformity.

One other word of explanation remains to be said. The trust Whistler confided in us does not end with his biography. The original plan had been to publish one volume of biography and one dealing with his work which naturally now could not be complete if it did not include a catalogue. The first volume has expanded into the two now issued. It remains for us to complete our task at a future period when difficulties of dates to which he was so indifferent, and of identification of pictures, whose titles he so capriciously changed, will have been overcome. As Whistler placed his confidence in us, we do not consider any effort on our part too great to enable his wishes to be carried out, and to honour one whom we must ever remember as the greatest artist of his generation, the most wonderful man we have ever known, and the most delightful friend we have ever made.

E. & J. P.

## CHAPTER I. THE WHISTLER FAMILY. THE YEARS EIGHTEEN THIRTY-FOUR TO EIGHTEEN FORTY-THREE

**J**AMES ABBOTT McNEILL WHISTLER was born on July 10, 1834, at Lowell, Massachusetts, in the United States of America.

Whistler, in the witness-box, during the suit he brought against Ruskin in 1878, gave St. Petersburg as his birthplace—or the reporters did—and he never denied it. Baltimore was given by M. Duret, in an article in the *Gazette des Beaux Arts* (April 1881), and M. Duret's mistake, since corrected by him, has been many times repeated. Mrs. Livermore, who knew Whistler as a child at Lowell and lived to tell us of those times—she died in November 1906—said, that when she asked him why he did not contradict this, he answered, “My dear Cousin Kate, if any one likes to think I was born in Baltimore, why should I deny it? It is of no consequence to me!” M. Duret suggests that, at the time of the Ruskin trial and of his article, Whistler probably was not sure where he was born. On entering West Point he stated that his place of birth was Massachusetts. But he would most likely have met any one indiscreet enough to question him or offer him information on the subject, as he did an American, who came up to him one evening in the Carlton Hotel, London, and by way of introduction said, “You know, Mr. Whistler, we were both born at Lowell, and at very much the same time. There is only the difference of a year—you are sixty-seven and I am sixty-eight.” “And 1834]

## JAMES McNEILL WHISTLER

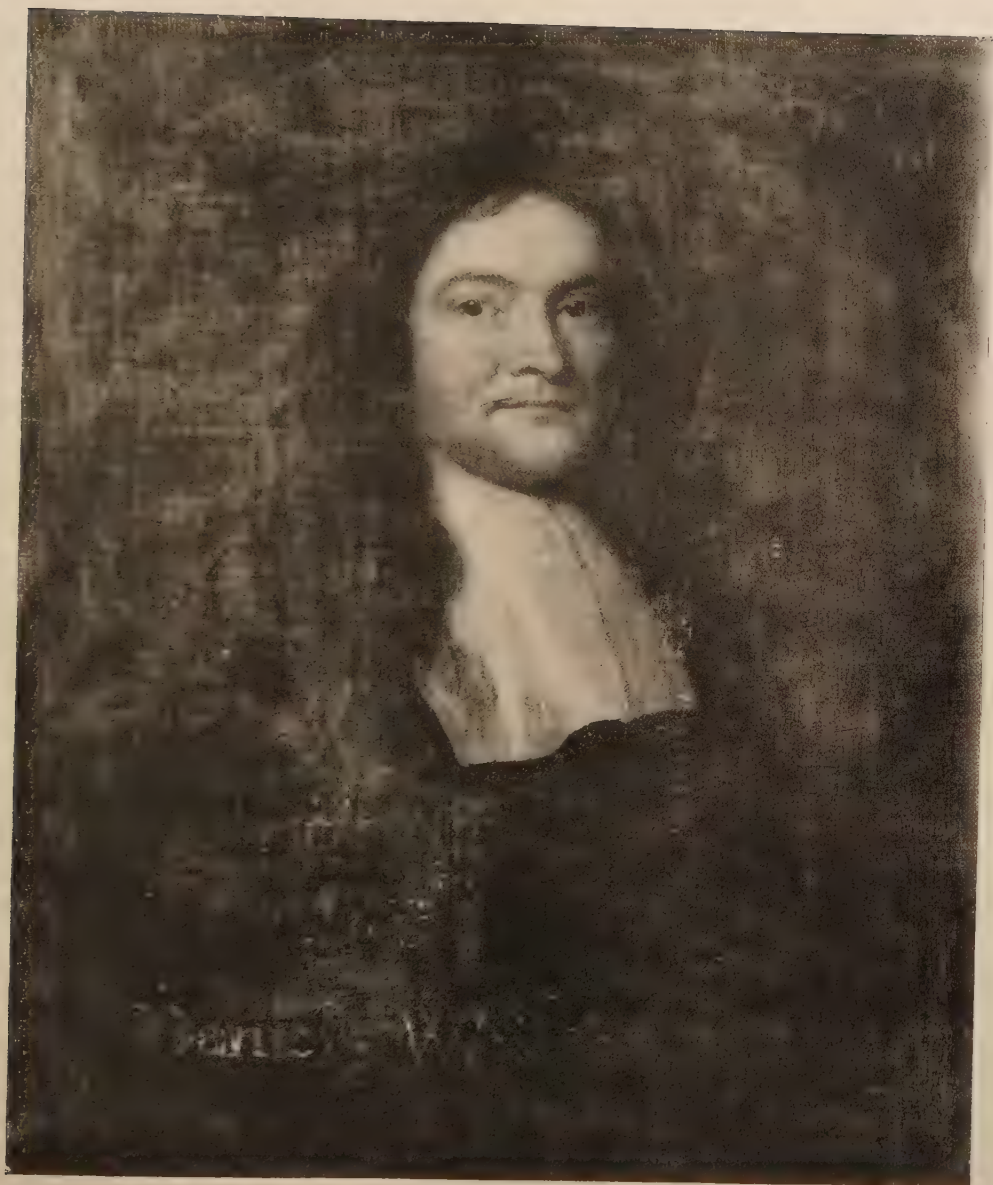
I told him," said Whistler, from whom we had the story the next day, "Very charming! And so you are sixty-eight and were born at Lowell, Massachusetts! Most interesting, no doubt, and as you please! But I shall be born when and where I want, and I do not choose to be born at Lowell, and I refuse to be sixty-seven!" That was Whistler's attitude. His own vagueness affected other authorities until it is said that the compiler of one catalogue hesitated to venture upon anything more definite than "McNeill Whistler, born in the United States."

Whistler was christened at St. Anne's Church in Lowell, on November 9, 1834. "Baptized, James Abbott, infant son of George Washington and Anna Mathilda Whistler: Sponsors, the parents—signed T. Edson"; so it is recorded in the church register. He was named after James Abbott, of Detroit, who had married his father's elder sister, Sarah Whistler. General Loomis L. Langdon tells us that the McNeill (his mother's name) was added shortly after he entered West Point.

"There is not a college in the land where a student sooner gets a nickname. The initials of Whistler's name, combined with the self-knowledge of his fluency of speech, quickly suggested to him the use that would be made of them, and he instinctively shrank from the combination. The cadets had no access to the records, and before any cadet knew his initials, Whistler had christened himself with his mother's name McNeill."

The Abbott he always preserved for legal and official documents. But eventually, he dropped it for all other purposes, "J.A.M." pleasing him no better than "J.A.W.," and he signed himself "James McNeill Whistler," or "J. M. N. Whistler."

Among the papers placed at our disposal by Lady Haden and Mrs. William Whistler are the family history and the family tree. The Rev. Rose Fuller Whistler, in his *Annals*



DR. DANIEL WHISTLER  
(1619-1684)



## THE WHISTLER FAMILY

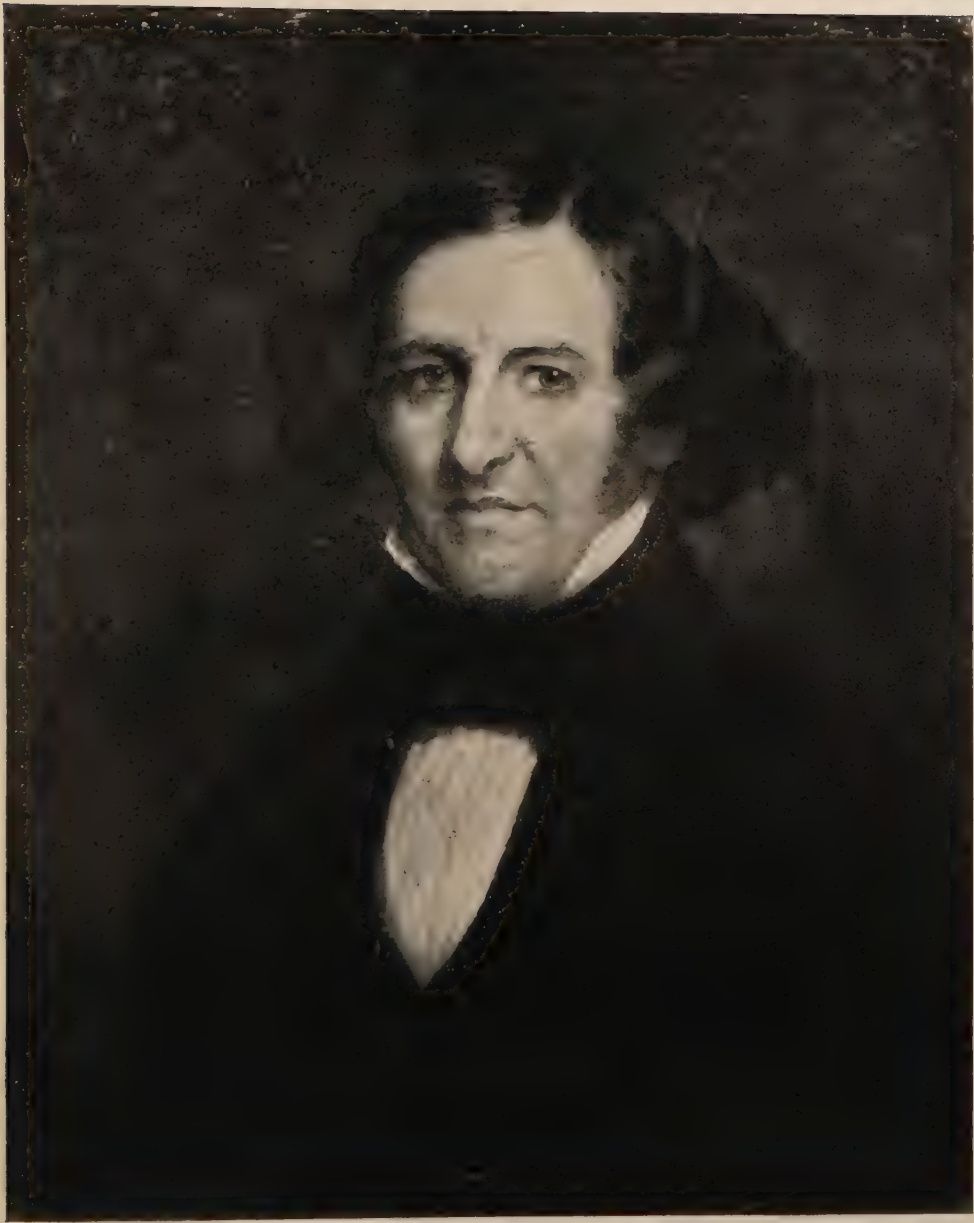
of an *English Family* (1887), states that Joha le Wistler de Westhannye (1272-1307), was the founder of the family. Another record starts with Rodolphus Whistler of Fowlescourte, Berkshire, about 1494. A third begins with John Whistler of Goring, Berkshire, born in 1609, and it is with his descendants that we come on something more than a string of names. The Whistlers, though there were well-known branches in Essex and Sussex, lived mainly in Goring, Whitchurch and Oxford, and are buried in many a church and churchyard of the Thames Valley. Brasses and tablets to the memory of several of the Fowlescourte branch, are, after various vicissitudes, now set up in the church of St. Mary at Goring. There is a stone tablet to Elinor Whistler, who died in January 1630, leaving money to the poor of the village, and she is buried in the same grave with her sister Margaret. There is a brass to Hugh Whistler, and he stands side by side with his wife, hands joined in prayer, while their three sons and five daughters are grouped below. A second brass is to "Hugh Whistler, the son of Master John Whistler of Goring, who departed this life the 17 Day of Januarie Anno Dominie 1675 being aged 216 years." \* An amazing statement, but there it is in the parish church, durable as brass can make it. This remarkable ancestor also figures as a family ghost at Gatehampton, where he is said to have been originally buried with all his money and where he still walks, guarding the treasures he had lived so many years to gather. The position of the Whistlers entitled them to a coat of arms described in the Harleian MSS. No. 1556, and thus in Gwillim's Heraldry: "Gules, five mascles, in bend between two Talbots passant argent;" and the motto was "Forward."

\* We give the inscription, already printed elsewhere, because it is just the sort of thing Whistler would have delighted in. It is a pity to spoil it by explaining it. But there is an explanation, simple enough, the 21 of the 216 being nothing but a badly engraved 4.

## JAMES McNEILL WHISTLER

The men were mostly soldiers and clergymen. A few, one way or another, made names for themselves. Gabriel Whistler of Combe, Sussex, in the sixteenth century, was so good a friend to King's College, Cambridge, that his shield is one of six worked into the wood-carving of the chapel; Anthony Whistler, poet, friend of Shenstone, belonged to the Whitchurch family; Dr. Daniel Whistler (1619-1684), of the Essex branch, was a Fellow of Merton, an original Fellow of the Royal Society, a member and afterwards president of the College of Physicians, the friend of Evelyn and Pepys. Evelyn often met him in "select companie" at supper, and once, he says, "Din'd at Dr. Whistler's at the Physicians Colledge," and found him not only learned but "the most facetious man in nature," and so, more than in name, the legitimate ancestor of Whistler. Pepys, who also dined and supped with him many times, pronounced him "good company and a very ingenious man." He, however, fell under a cloud with the officials of the College of Physicians, and his portrait has been consigned to a back stairway of the College in Pall Mall. In the seventeenth century, Ralph Whistler, under the Salter's Company of London, was one of the English colonisers of Ulster, and, to this day, the ruins of "Whistler's Castle" stand on the shores of Lough Neagh. Francis Whistler, under the Second Charter, was one of the early settlers of Virginia. When Whistler saw the name "Francis Whistler, Gentleman," in the *Genesis of the United States*, he said to us, "that there was an ancestor, with the hall-mark F.F.V. (First Families of Virginia), who tickled my American snobbery, and washed out the taint of Lowell."

The American Whistlers are descended directly from John Whistler, of the Irish branch. In his youth, he ran away from home and enlisted in the British army as a private, and the legend is that Sir Kensington Whistler, an English



MAJOR GEORGE WASHINGTON WHISTLER  
(WHISTLER'S FATHER)



## THE WHISTLER FAMILY

cousin, an officer in the same regiment, objected to having a relative in the ranks. John Whistler, therefore, was transferred to another regiment, in which he was colour-sergeant, just starting for the American colonies to join Burgoyne's army. He arrived in time to surrender at Saratoga, October 17, 1777. After this, he went back to England, received his honourable discharge from the army, and later eloped with Anna, daughter of Sir Edward Bishop, or Bischoff. He liked what he had seen of the colonies and, with his wife, returned and settled at Hagerstown, Maryland. He again enlisted, this time in the United States army. He was wounded in St. Clair's defeat by the Indians, November 4, 1791, rose to be captain in the First U.S. Infantry, with the brevet rank of major and served in the war of 1812 against Great Britain. In 1803 he was stationed at Detroit; later at Fort Dearborn, which he helped to build; and Fort Wayne, in what was then the North-West-Territory, later Indiana. According to Mr. Eddy, Whistler once said to a visitor from Chicago:

"Chicago, dear me, what a wonderful place! I really ought to visit it some day—for, you know, my grandfather founded the city and my uncle was the last commander of Fort Dearborn!"

In 1815, upon the reduction of the army, Major John Whistler was retired—two of his sons were already officers carrying on the family tradition—and he was given the post of military storekeeper at Newport, Kentucky, and then at Jefferson Barracks, St. Louis. He died in 1817, at Bellefontaine, Missouri, leaving the reputation of a good linguist, good musician, good soldier, good father. In his family it is said of him that he "united firmness with tenderness" and "impressed upon his children the importance of a faithful and thorough performance of duties in whatever position they should be placed."

## JAMES McNEILL WHISTLER

Of Major Whistler's large family of fifteen children, three sons are remembered as soldiers, and three daughters married army officers. The sons were William, a colonel in the United States army, who died at Newport, Kentucky, in 1863; John, a lieutenant, whose death was due to wounds at the battle of Maguago, near Detroit, 1812; George Washington, who rose to the rank of major—the most distinguished of the three brothers and the father of James Abbott McNeill Whistler.

George Washington Whistler was born on May 19, 1800, at Fort Wayne. His childhood was spent at the military posts where his father was stationed; he was educated mostly at Newport, Kentucky; and from Kentucky, when he was a little over fourteen, he received his appointment to the Military Academy, West Point. He remained there for five years, graduating on July 1, 1819. From the rank of second lieutenant, to which he was appointed in the First Artillery, he rose to be first lieutenant in the Second Artillery. This was in 1829. Four years afterwards, in 1833, with the rank of major, he resigned his commission in the army.

At West Point he is remembered for his gaiety. Mr. George L. Vose, his biographer, and others, tell stories that might have been told of his son. One is of some breach of discipline, for which he was made to bestride a gun on the campus for a certain time. As he sat there, he saw, coming towards him, the Miss Swift he was to marry before very long. Out came his handkerchief, and, leaning over the gun, he set to work cleaning it so carefully that he was "honoured, not disgraced," in her eyes. He was "number one" in drawing, and his wonderful playing on the flute won for him the nickname "Pipes." After he left West Point, he served on topographical duty, and for a few months he was assistant professor at the Academy. Under Major Albert he was on the Commission that traced the North-West Boundary



HOUSE IN WHICH WHISTLER WAS BORN. LOWELL, MASS.



OLD CORNER HOUSE, STONINGTON



ST. ANNE'S CHURCH, LOWELL, MASS.



## THE WHISTLER FAMILY

between Lake Superior and the Lake of the Woods. There was not much fighting for American officers of his generation. But railroads were being built throughout the country, and so few were the civil engineers available that West Point graduates were allowed by Government to work for private corporations. Major Whistler was engineer on the Baltimore and Ohio Railroad, the Baltimore and Susquehanna and the Paterson and Hudson River, now a part of the Erie Railroad. For the Baltimore and Ohio he went to England in 1828 to examine the English railway system. He was directing the construction of the line from Stonington to Providence, an extension of the Boston and Providence Railroad, when he resigned to carry on his profession as a civil engineer.

In the meanwhile, he had been married twice. His first wife was Mary Swift, daughter of Dr. Foster Swift, of the U.S. Army. She left three children: George, who became a well-known civil engineer; Joseph, who died in youth; and Deborah, now Lady Haden. His second wife was Anna Mathilda McNeill, daughter of Dr. Charles Donald McNeill of Wilmington, North Carolina, and sister of William Gibbs McNeill, a West Point classmate and a constant associate in much of Major Whistler's engineering work. The McNeills were descended from the McNeills of Skye, an offshoot from the McNeills of Barra. Their chief, Donald, emigrated with sixty of his clan to North Carolina in 1746, after the fall of the Stuarts, to whom he and his people had always been loyal. He bought land on Cape Fear river, and his estate was known as Tweedside. Charles Donald McNeill was the grandson of this Donald. Like many men of the family he studied medicine at the University of Edinburgh. During the Revolutionary War his sympathies were with England and he retired for a while to the West Indies. When the war was over, he returned, and settled at Wilmington, North Carolina. He was twice married: his second wife, Martha

## JAMES McNEILL WHISTLER

Kingsley, was the mother of Anna Mathilda McNeill, who became Mrs. George Washington Whistler. The McNeills were related by marriage to the Fairfaxes and other well-known Virginia families. And so Whistler, on his mother's side, was the southerner he loved to call himself.

In 1834, Major Whistler accepted the offer of the important post of engineer to the Proprietors of Locks and Canals at Lowell, and to this town, then scarcely more than a village, he brought his family. There, in what is known as the Paul Moody House in Worthen Street, Whistler was born, though for other Lowell houses, as for other American towns, the honour has been claimed; but the city of Lowell has so little doubt on the subject that it has purchased the Worthen Street house for a museum, a Whistler Memorial. Two years later, the second son, William Gibbs McNeill, was born. In 1837, Major Whistler moved to Stonington, Connecticut, his continual presence being needed there, and Miss Emma W. Palmer and Mrs. Dr. Stanton, his wife's nieces, still remember his "pleasant house on Main Street." It is said that he had at this time a chaise fitted with car wheels in which he and his family, when there were no trains, drove every Sunday on the tracks to church at Westerly; also that a locomotive named "Whistler" was in use on the road until recently. His work was mainly on the Stonington Railroad, but he was consulted in regard to many other new lines. Among these was the Western Railroad of Massachusetts, for which, with his brother-in-law, William Gibbs McNeill, he was consulting engineer from 1836 to 1840. In 1840, he was made chief engineer, and he removed to Springfield, Massachusetts, where, with his family, he lived in what is now known as the Ethan Chapin Homestead, on Chestnut Street, north of Edward Street. A third son, Kirk Booth, who had been born at Stonington in 1838, died at Springfield in 1842, and here a fourth son, Charles Donald, was born in 1841.



DR. CHARLES DONALD MCNEILL  
GRANDPARENTS OF WHISTLER



MRS. CHARLES DONALD MCNEILL  
GRANDPARENTS OF WHISTLER



## THE WHISTLER FAMILY

In 1842, the Emperor Nicholas I. of Russia sent a Commission, under Colonel Melnikoff, round Europe and to America to find the best methods and the best man to build the railroad from St. Petersburg to Moscow, and they chose for this work the American civil engineer and the United States officer, George Washington Whistler. The honour was great and the salary large, \$12,000 a year. He accepted, and started for Russia in midsummer 1842. Until his plans were settled, he left his family at Stonington, under the charge of Dr. George E. Palmer, his brother-in-law.

The life of a child, for the first nine years or so, is not of much interest to any one save his parents. An idea can be formed of Whistler's training up to this period. His father was a West Point man, with all that is fine in the West Point tradition. Mrs. Whistler was "one of the saints upon earth," as she has been called. But she was strict, "puritanical," as uncompromising in matters of duty and religion as if she had been born and bred in Puritan New England. Dr. Whistler—Willie—often told his wife of the dread with which he and Jimmie, when very little, looked forward to Saturday afternoon, with its overhauling of clothes, emptying of pockets, washing of heads, putting away of toys, and general preparation for Sunday, when the Bible was the only book they were allowed to read. Every line Whistler wrote was evidence of his familiar knowledge of the Bible. Ignorance of King James' version may be the reason why so many literary critics have found fault with his English.

Of the actual facts and incidents of Whistler's early childhood there are few to record. Mrs. Livermore, "K. L.," who wrote to the *Times* (August 28, 1903) to settle the dispute as to the place of Whistler's birth, lived many years in Lowell. She was a great friend of the Whistlers, and was all her life "Cousin Kate" to Whistler and his brother. She was  
1842]

## JAMES McNEILL WHISTLER

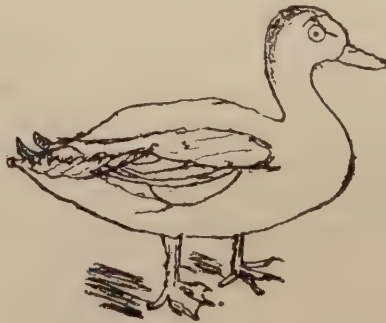
fourteen years older than Whistler, and she could tell of his baby beauty, so great that her father used to say "it was enough to make Sir Joshua Reynolds come out of his grave and paint Jemmie\* asleep." Mrs. Livermore dwelt especially on the child's beautiful hands "which belong to so many of the Whistlers—I attribute them to his Irish blood." When she returned to Lowell in 1836, from the Manor School at York, England, Mrs. Whistler's son, Willie, had just been born :

"As soon as Mrs. Whistler was strong enough she sent for me to go and see her boy, and I did see her and her baby in bed ! and then I asked, 'Where is Jemmie, of whom I have heard so much ?' She replied, 'He was in the room a short time since, and I think he must be here still.' So I went softly about the room till I saw a very small form prostrate and at full length on the shelf under the dressing-table, and I took hold of an arm and a leg and placed him on my knee, and then said, 'What were you doing, dear, under the table ?' 'I'se drawrin',' and in one very beautiful little hand he held the paper, in the other the pencil."

The drawing of a duck, lent us by Mrs. Livermore, is curiously firm and strong for the child of four he was when he made it.

These memories, in their slightness, indicate the years between the child's birth in 1834 and the year 1843, when Major Whistler sent for his wife and children to join him in Russia, and Whistler was just nine years old.

\* In Whistler's childhood, he was called Jimmie, Jemmie, Jamie, James and Jim, and we have used these names as we have found them in the letters written to us and the books quoted.



## CHAPTER II. IN RUSSIA. THE YEARS EIGHTEEN FORTY-THREE TO EIGHTEEN FORTY-NINE

MRS. WHISTLER sailed from Boston in the *Arcadia* on August 12, 1843, taking with her Deborah, Major Whistler's only daughter (now Lady Haden), and the three boys, James, William and Charles. George Whistler, Major Whistler's eldest son, and her "good maid Mary" went along to take care of them. The story of their journey and their life in Russia is recorded in Mrs. Whistler's journal.

They arrived at Liverpool on the 29th of the same month. Mrs. Whistler's two half-sisters, Mrs. William Winstanley and Miss Alicia McNeill, lived at Preston, and there they stayed a fortnight. Then, after a few days in London, they sailed for Hamburg.

The journey that followed explains why Major Whistler was so much needed in Russia. There was no railroad from Hamburg, and so they drove by carriage to Lübeck, by stage to Travemünde, where they took the steamer *Alexandra* for St. Petersburg, and where George Whistler left them. Between Travemünde and Cronstadt, Charles, the youngest child, fell fatally ill of sea-sickness, and died within a day. There was just time to bury him at Cronstadt—temporarily, he was afterwards buried at Stonington—and his death saddened the long-looked-for meeting between Major Whistler and his wife and children.

Mrs. Whistler objected to living in hotels and to boarding,  
1843]

## JAMES McNEILL WHISTLER

and a house was found in the Galernaya. She did her best to make it not only a "comfortable," but an American home, for Major Whistler's attachment to his native land, she said, was so strong as to be almost a religious sentiment. Their food was American as far as could be managed, American holidays were kept as nearly as possible in American fashion. Many of their friends were Americans. Major Whistler was nominally, or technically, consulting engineer to Colonel Melnikoff, but practically he was in charge of the line, both in its construction and in its equipment, and as the materials were supplied by the firm of Winans of Baltimore, Mr. Winans and his partners, Mr. Harrison and Mr. Eastwick of Philadelphia, with their families, were also in Russia.

Mrs. Whistler's strictness did not mean an opposition to all pleasure. At times she became afraid that her boys were not "keeping to the straight and narrow way." There were evenings of illuminations in St. Petersburg that put off bedtime indefinitely; there were afternoons of skating and coasting; Christmas gaieties, with Christmas dinners of roast turkey and real pumpkin pie; visits to American friends; parties at home, when the two boys "behaved like gentlemen, and their father commended them upon it"; there were presents of guns from the father, returning from long absences on the road and in Moscow; there were dancing lessons, which Jemmie would have done almost anything rather than miss.

Whistler, as a boy, was exactly what those who knew him as a man would expect: gay and bright, absorbed in his work when that work was in any way related to art, brave and fearless, selfish, if selfishness is another name for ambition, considerate and kindly, above all to his mother. The boy, like the man, was delightful to those who understood him, "startling," "alarming," to those who did not.



MAJOR GEORGE WASHINGTON WHISTLER  
AS A YOUNG MAN



MRS. GEORGE WASHINGTON WHISTLER

FATHER AND MOTHER



## IN RUSSIA

Mrs. Whistler's Journal soon becomes extremely interesting as the following quotations show :

*March 29 (1844).*—"I must not omit recording our visiting the Gastinnoi to-day in anticipation of Palm Sunday. Our two boys were most excited, Jemmie's animation roused the wonder of many, for even in crowds here such decorum and gravity prevails that it must be surprising when there is any ebullition of joy."

*April 22 (1844).*—"Jemmie is confined to his bed with a mustard plaster on his throat; he has been very poorly since the thawing season commenced, soon becoming overheated, takes cold; when he complained of pain first in his shoulder, then in his side, my fears of a return of last year's attack made me tremble, and when I gaze upon his pale face sleeping, contrasted to Willie's round cheeks, my heart is full; our dear James said to me the other day, so touchingly, 'Oh, I am sorry the Emperor ever asked father to come to Russia, but if I had the boys here, I should not feel so impatient to get back to Stonington,' yet I cannot think it the climate here affects his health; Willie never was as stout in his native land, and James looks better than when we brought him here. At 8 o'clock I am often at my reading or sewing without a candle, and I cannot persuade James to put up his drawing and go to bed while it is light."

The Journal shows that Whistler began as a boy to suffer from the severe rheumatic attacks that weakened his heart and caused his death. Major and Mrs. Whistler rented a country house on the Peterhoff Road in the spring of 1844. There is an account of a day spent at Tsarskoé Seló, when Colonel Todd, the American Minister to Russia, took them to see the Catherine Palace :

*May 6 (1844).*—"Rode to the station, and took the cars upon the only railroad in Russia, which took us the twenty versts to the pretty town. It would be ungenerous in me to remark how inferior the railroad, cars, etc., seemed to us Americans. The boys were delighted with it all. Jemmie wished he could stay to examine the fine pictures and know who painted them, but

## JAMES McNEILL WHISTLER

as I returned through the grounds I asked him if he should wish to be a grand duke and own it all for playgrounds : he decided there could be no freedom with a footman at his heels."

*July 1 (1844).*—" . . . I went with Willie to do some shopping in the Nevski. He is rather less excitable than Jemmie, and therefore more tractable. They each can make their wants known in Russ., but I prefer this gentlest of my dear boys to go with me. We had hardly reached home when a tremendous shower came up, and Jemmie and a friend, who had been out in a boat on a canal at the end of our avenue, got well drenched. Just as we were seated at tea, a carriage drove up, and Mr. Miller entered, introducing Sir William Allen, the great Scotch artist, of whom we have heard lately, who has come to St. Petersburg to revive on canvas some of the most striking events from the life of Peter the Great. They had been to the Monastery to listen to the chanting at Vespers in the Greek chapel. Mr. Miller congratulated his companion on being in the nick of time for our excellent home-made bread and fresh butter, and, above all, the refreshment of a good cup of tea. His chat then turned upon the subject of Sir William Allen's painting of Peter the Great teaching the mujiks to make ships. This made Jemmie's eyes express so much interest that his love for the art was discovered, and Sir William must needs see his attempts. When my boys had said good-night, the great artist remarked to me, 'Your little boy has uncommon genius, but do not urge him beyond his inclination.' I told him his gift had only been cultivated as an amusement, and that I was obliged to interfere, or his application would confine him more than we approved."

Of these attempts there remain few examples. One is the portrait of his Aunt Alicia McNeill, who visited them in Russia in 1844, sent to Mr. Palmer at Stonington, with the inscription : "James to Aunt Kate." Mrs. Livermore has said that in an excellent letter in French Jemmie sent her from St. Petersburg when he was ten or eleven, "he enclosed some pretty pen-and-ink drawings, each on a separate bit of paper, and each surrounded by a frame of his own designing." Whistler told us he could remember wonderful things he had done during the years in Russia.

## IN RUSSIA

Once, he said, in London with his father, he had not been well, and he had been given a hot foot-bath, and he could never forget how he sat looking at his foot, and then got his paper and colours and set to work to make a study of it, "and in Russia," he added, "I was always doing that sort of thing."

*July 4 (1844).*—"I have given my boys holiday to celebrate the Independence of their country. . . . This morning Jemmie began relating anecdotes from the life of Charles XII. of Sweden, and rather upbraided me that I could not let him do as that monarch had done at seven years old—manage a horse! I should have been at a loss how to afford my boys a holiday, with a military parade to-day, but there was an encampment of cadets, about two estates off, and they went with Colonel T.'s sons to see them."

*July 10 (1844).*—"A poem selected by my darling Jamie and put under my plate at the breakfast-table, as a surprise on his tenth birthday. I shall copy it, that he may be reminded of his happy childhood, when perhaps his grateful mother is not with him."

*August 20 (1844).*—" . . . Jemmie is writing a note to his Swedish tutor on his birthday. Jemmie loves him sincerely and gratefully. I suppose his partiality to this Swede makes him espouse his country's cause and admire the qualities of Charles XII. so greatly to the prejudice of Peter the Great. He has been quite enthusiastic while reading the life of this king of Sweden this summer, and too willing to excuse his errors."

*August 23 (1844).*—"I wish I could describe the gardens at Peterhof, where we were invited to drive to-day. The fountains are perhaps the finest in the world. The water descends in sheets over steps, all the heathen deities presiding. Jemmie was delighted with the figure of Samson tearing open the jaws of the lion, from which ascends a *jet d'eau* one hundred feet. . . . There are some fine pictures, but Peter's own paintings of the feathered race ought to be most highly prized, though our Jemmie was so saucy as to laugh at them."

*August 28 (1844).*—"I availed myself of Col. Todd's invitation to visit Tsarskoé Seló to-day with Aunt Alicia, Deborah and the two dear boys, who are always so delighted at these little

## JAMES McNEILL WHISTLER

excursions. . . . My little Jemmie's heart was made sad by discovering swords which had been taken in the battle between Peter and Charles XII., for he knew, from their rich hilts set in pearls and precious stones, that they must have belonged to noble Swedes. 'Oh!' he exclaimed, 'I'd rather have one of these than all the other things in the armoury! How beautiful they are!' . . . I was somewhat annoyed that Col. Todd had deemed it necessary, to entertain us, to have a dinner party for us. One was a Russian general who spoke English, but the captain of the Chevalier Guards, who sat next Deborah, was the greatest acquisition to the party, he had so much vivacity and politeness. . . . The colonel proposed the Emperor's health in champagne, which not even the Russian general, who declined wine, could refuse, and even I put my glass to my lips, which so encouraged my little boys that they presented their glasses to be filled, and, forgetting at their little side-table the guests at ours, called out aloud, '*Santé à l'Empereur!*' The captain clapped his hands with delight, and afterwards addressed them in French. All at the table laughed and called the boys '*Bons sujets.*'"

They were in St. Petersburg again in September, preparing their Christmas gifts for America. Whistler, sending one to his cousin, Amos Palmer, wrote with it a letter to say, in an outburst of patriotism, that the English were going to America to be licked by the Yankees: it was at the time of the threatened disagreement over the Oregon Territory. In another letter from Russia, he gives the Fourth of July as his birthday.

*Ash Wednesday* (1845).—"I avail myself of this Lenten season to have my boys every morning before breakfast recite a verse from the psalms, and I, who wish to encourage them, am ready with my response. How very thankful I shall be when the weather moderates so that Jemmie's long imprisonment may end, and Willie have his dear brother with him in the skating grounds and ice-hills. Here comes my good boy Jemmie now, with his history in hand to read to me, as he does every afternoon, as we fear they may lose their own language in other tongues, and thus I gain a half-hour's enjoyment by hearing them read daily."

*April 5* (1845).—"Our boys have left the breakfast-table

## IN RUSSIA

before 8 o'clock to trundle their new hoops on the Quai with their governess, and have brought home such bright red cheeks and buoyant spirits to enter the schoolroom with and to gladden my eyes. Jemmie began his course of drawing lessons at the Academy of Fine Arts just on the opposite side of the Neva, exactly fronting my bedroom window. He is entered at the second room. There are two higher, and he fears he shall not reach them, because the officer who is still to continue his private lesson at home is a pupil himself in the highest, and Jemmie looks up to him with all the reverence an artist merits. He seems greatly to enjoy going to his class, and yesterday had to go by the bridge on account of the ice, and felt very important when he told me he had to give the *Isvóshetlók* 15 copecks silver instead of 10.\*

On May 14 (1845) there was a review of troops in St. Petersburg, and a window in the Prince of Oldenburg's palace overlooking the Champ de Mars was reserved for the Whistlers:

"Jemmie's eagerness to attain all his desires for information and his fearlessness often makes him offend, and it makes him appear less amiable than he really is. The officers, however, seemed to find amusement in his remarks in French or English as they accosted him. They were soon informed of his military ardour and that he hoped to serve his country. England? No, indeed! Russia, then? No, no, America, of course!"

"On September 18, 1845, the new tutor, M. Lamartine, was installed, and the freedom with which the boys chatted with him soon made me comfortable, for Jemmie and he are both such talkers. Great has been the demand for patience on his part, until they were broken of their wild pranks in the school and street, for the Russian lads are drilled from infancy to politeness and submission."

*May 2 (1846).*—"The boys are in the school-room now, reading the Roman history in French to M. Lamartine, promising

\* The official record of Whistler as an art student in St. Petersburg has been sent us from the Imperial Academy of Science, through the kind intervention of the American Ambassador to Russia, the Hon. Mr. Meyer. In the Archives of the Imperial Academy of Science there is a "List of Scholars of the Imperial Academy of Fine Arts," and in this and the "Class Journal of the Inspector" for 1845, James Whistler is entered as "belonging to the drawing class, heads from Nature." In 1846 he was, on March 2, examined and passed as "first" in his class, his number being 28. From 1845 to 1849, Professor Vistelious and Voivov were the masters in the life class.

## JAMES McNEILL WHISTLER

themselves the pleasure of reviewing the pictures at the Academy of Fine Arts at noon, which they have enjoyed almost every day this week. It is the Triennial Exhibition and we like them to become familiar with the subjects of the modern artists, and to James especially it is the greatest treat we could offer. I went last Wednesday with Whistler and was highly gratified. I should like to take some of the Russian scenes so faithfully portrayed to show in my native land. My James had described a boy's portrait said to be *his* likeness, and although the eyes were black and the curls darker, we found it so like him, that his father said he would be glad to buy it, but its frame would only correspond with the furniture of a palace. The boy is taken in a white shirt with crimped frill, open at the throat; it is half-length and no other garment could show off the glow of the brunette complexion so finely."

*May 30 (1846).*—"Aunt Kate sent Jamie some marbles which have delighted his heart, and I fear he will read less than ever, loving play as he does. . . . Yesterday the Empress was welcomed back to St. Petersburg. Last night the illumination which my boys have been eagerly expecting took place. When at 10.30 they came in, Jamie expressed such an eager desire that I would allow him to be my escort just to take a peep at the Nevski that I could not deny him. The effect of the light from Vasili Ostrow was very beautiful, and as we drove along the Quai, the flowers and decorations of large mansions were, I thought, even more tasteful. We had to fall into a line of carriages in the Isaac Square to enter that Broadway, and just then a shout from the populace announced to us that the Empress was passing. I was terrified lest the poles of their carriages should run into our backs, or that some horses might take fright or bite us, we were so close, but Jamie laughed heartily and aloud at my timidity. He behaved like a man. With one arm he guarded me, and with the other kept the animals at a proper distance; and, I must confess, brilliant as the spectacle was, *my* great pleasure was derived from the conduct of my dear and manly boy."

*July 7 (1846).*—"This is the Empress's fiftieth anniversary and the Court are all at Peterhof. My two boys found much amusement in propelling themselves on the drawbridge, to and from the fancy island in the pond at Mrs. G.'s, where we went to spend the day; they find it such a treat to be in the country, and just run wild, chasing butterflies and picking the wild flowers so

## IN RUSSIA

abundant. But nothing gave them so much pleasure as their 4th July, spent with their little American friends at Alexandrovsky, the Eastwicks ; the fireworks, percussion caps, muskets, horseback riding, &c., make them think it the most delightful place in Russia. In some way James caught cold, and his throat was so inflamed that leeches were applied, and he has been in consequence confined to his room. Our lazy dominie has taken a vacation, so I have had the boys on my hands entirely. We spend our mornings in reading, drawing, &c. Then the boys take their row with good John across the Neva, to the morning bath, and in the cool of the afternoon a drive to the island or a range in the summer gardens, or a row on the river."

*July 27 (1846).*—"Last Wednesday, they had another long day in the country, and got themselves into much mischief. They had at last broken the ropes of the drawbridge, by which it was drawn to and from the island, and there were my wild boys prisoners on it. I thought it best for them to remain so, as they were so unruly, but the good-natured dominie was pressed into their service, and swimming to their rescue, ere I could interfere ; Jemmie was so drenched by his efforts that dear Mrs. R. took him away to her room to coax him to lie down awhile and to rub him dry, lest his sore throat return to tell a tale of disobedience. . . . On Thursday, there was another grand celebration of the birthday of the Grand Duchess Olga. I gladly gave Mary permission to take the boys in our carriage, while I stayed at home with baby—they were gone so long that I grew anxious about them, but finally they arrived very tired, and poor Mary said she never wanted to go in such a crowd again. James had protected her as well as he was able, but she was glad to get home safely. The boys, however, enjoyed it immensely, as they saw all the Imperial family within arm's length, as they alighted from their pony chaises to enter the New Palace. . . . We were invited to go to the New Palace, and went immediately to the apartment occupied by his lamented daughter. On one side is the lovely picture painted by Buloff, so like her in life and health, though taken after death, as representing her spirit passing upwards to the palace above the blue sky. She wears her Imperial robes with a crown on her head ; at the back of the crown is a halo of glory—the stars surround her as she passes through them. No wonder James should have thought this picture the most interesting of all the works of art around us."

## JAMES McNEILL WHISTLER

In the autumn of 1846, Major Whistler

“placed the boys, as boarders, at Mons. Jourdan’s school. My dear boys almost daily exchange *billet-doux* with mother, since their absence of a week at a time from home. James reported everything ‘first-rate,’ even to brown bread and salt for breakfast, and greens for dinner, and both forebore to speak of home-sickness, and welcome indeed were they on their first Saturday at home, when they opened the front door, and called ‘Mother, Mother!’ as they rushed in all in a glow, and they looked almost handsome in their new round black cloth caps, set to one side of their cropped heads, and the tight school uniform of grey trousers and black jacket makes them appear taller and straighter; Jamie found the new suit too tight for his drawing lesson, so he sacrificed vanity to comfort, and was not diverted from his two hours’ drawing by the other boys’ frolics, which argues well for his determination to improve, as he promised his father. How I enjoyed having them back and listening to all their chat about their school—they seemed to enjoy their nice home tea. When it came time for them to go back, Willie broke down and told me all he had suffered from home-sickness, and when I talked to my more manly James, I unfortunately said, ‘You do not know what he feels.’ Then Jamie’s wounded love melted him into tears, as he said, ‘Oh! mother, you think I don’t miss being away from home!’ he brushed away the shower with the back of his hand as if he was afraid of being seen weeping. Dear boys, may they never miss me as I miss them!’”\*

*November 14 (1846).*—“Jamie was kept in until night last Saturday, and made to write a given portion of French over twenty-five times as a punishment for stopping to talk to a class-mate after their recitation, instead of marching back to his seat according to order—poor fellow, it was rather severe when he had looked only for rewards during the week; as he had not had one mark of disapprobation in all that time, and was so much elated by his number of good balls for perfect recitations that he forgot disobedience of orders is a capital offence under military discipline. He lost his drawing lesson, and made us all unhappy at home. We tried to keep his dinner hot, but his appetite had forsaken him, although only having eaten a penny roll since breakfast—he dashed the tears of vexation from his eyes at losing his drawing

\* Shortly after this, Mrs. Whistler’s youngest son, John Bouttatz, born in the summer of 1845, died, and his body was sent for burial to Stonington.

## IN RUSSIA

lesson, but his cheerfulness was soon restored and we had our usual pleasant evening."

*January 23 (1847).*—"It is three weeks this afternoon since the dear boys came home from school to spend the Russian Christmas and holidays, and it seems not probable that they shall return again to Mons. Jourdan's this winter. James was drooping from the close confinement, and for two days was confined to his bed. Then Willie was taken. They are quite recovered now, and skate almost daily on the Neva, and Jamie often crosses on the ice to the Academy of Fine Arts to spend an hour or two. . . . Jamie was taken ill with a rheumatic attack soon after this, and I have had my hands full, for he has suffered much with pain and weariness, but he is gradually convalescing, and to-day, January 30, he was able to walk across the floor; he has been allowed to amuse himself with his pencil, while I read to him; he has not taken a dose of medicine during the attack, but great care was necessary in his diet."

*February 27 (1847).*—"Never shall I cease to record with deep gratitude dear Jamie's un murmuring submission these last six weeks. He still cannot wear jacket or trousers, as the blistering still continues on his chest. What a blessing is such a contented temper as his, so grateful for every kindness, and rarely complains. He is now enjoying a huge volume of Hogarth's engravings, so famous in the Gallery of Artists. We put the immense book on the bed, and draw the great easy-chair close up, so that he can feast upon it without fatigue. He said, while so engaged yesterday, 'Oh, how I wish I were well, I want so to show these engravings to my drawing-master, it is not every one who has a chance of seeing Hogarth's own engravings of his originals,' and then added, in his own happy way, 'and if I had not been ill, mother, perhaps no one would have thought of showing them to me.'"

From this time until his death, Whistler always believed Hogarth to be the greatest English artist who ever lived and he seldom lost an opportunity of saying so. The long attack of illness in 1847 is therefore memorable as the beginning of his love of Hogarth which became an article of faith with him, and also as a proof of his early and right appreciation of great art.

1847]

## JAMES McNEILL WHISTLER

*March 23 (1847).*—"After many postponements, the Emperor finally inspected the Railroad department, the *héritier*, the Grand Duke Constantine, and many of the Court were invited. The day after his visit to the works, the Court held a *levée*, my husband was invited; when he arrived was summoned to a private audience in an inner apartment, the Emperor met him with marked kindness, kissed him on each side his face, and hung an ornament suspended by a scarlet ribbon around his neck, saying the Emperor thus conferred upon him the Order of St. Anne. Whistler, as such honours are new to Republicans, was somewhat abashed, but when he returned with the Court to the large circle in the outer room, he was congratulated by the officers generally."

It is said that Major Whistler had been asked to wear the Russian uniform, but had refused. The decoration, however, he could not decline.

Whistler told us, as have others, that the Emperor was most impressed with the way Major Whistler met every difficulty and emergency. When he asked the Czar how the line should be built, showing him the map of the country between St. Petersburg and Moscow, the Czar, as everybody knows, took a ruler, drew a straight line from one city to the other, ignoring everything in the way: and the railroad virtually follows that line to-day. But, everybody does not know that when the rolling-stock was ready, it was found that it had been made of a different gauge from the rails. The people who supplied it demanded to be paid. Major Whistler not only refused, but burnt it, and took the entire responsibility.

Mrs. Whistler and the three children spent the summer of 1847 in England, where Major Whistler joined them. They visited their relations, and before their return, the daughter, Deborah, was married. She had met Seymour Haden, then a young physician, while she was staying with her aunts and their friends, the Chapmans, at Preston. Whistler told us that his father came to England especially to see Haden,

## IN RUSSIA

and Whistler was with his father when they met. Haden was "like a schoolmaster," patted him on the shoulder, and said it was high time the boy went to school.

The wedding was on October 10, 1847: "Deborah's wedding-day," Mrs. Whistler wrote in her Journal. "Bright and pleasant. James the only groomsman, and very proud of the honour."

The next summer (1848) Mrs. Whistler went back to England. Jamie had had another of his bad attacks of rheumatic fever, cholera broke out in St. Petersburg, and at its very name, she wrote, her heart failed her. On July 6 she was on board the *Camilla*, bound for London, with her boys. Jamie was better already, and anxious to take a portrait of a young Hindu aboard.

July 22 (1848).—"Shanklin, Isle of Wight. This is Willie's twelfth birthday and has been devoted to his pleasure, and poor Jamie was envious that he could not bathe with us in the beautiful summer sea, for the doctors think the bracing air as much as he can bear, we three had a seaside ramble and then returned to rest at our cottage. I plied the needle, while my boys amused themselves, Willie in making wax flowers, and Jemmie in drawing."

Monday [no date].—"This day being especially fine, Mrs. P. took the boys on a pedestrian excursion along the shore to Culver Cliffs. In the hope that Jamie might finish his sketch of Cook's Castle, we started the next day after an early dinner, taking a donkey with us for fear of fatigue, for James or Deborah. . . . We availed ourselves of a lovely bright morning to take a drive, said to be the most charming in England along the south coast of the isle as far as 'Black Gang Chine, where we alighted at the inn. Jamie flew off like a sea fowl, his sketch-book in hand, and when I finally found him, he was seated on the red sandy beach, down, down, down, where it was with difficulty Willie and I followed him. He was attempting the sketch of the waterfall and cavern up the side of the precipice; he came back later, glowing with the exercise of climbing, with sketch-book in hand, and laughing at being 'Jacky last,' as we were all assembled for our drive back."

## JAMES McNEILL WHISTLER

Jamie did not return with Mrs. Whistler. It was feared his health would not stand another Russian winter, and he was left in England. He lived with his sister and her husband in London at 62 Sloane Street, and studied with a clergyman, who had but one other pupil. It was then that Boxall, commissioned by Major Whistler, painted his portrait—"when he was fourteen years old—when he was living with us in Sloane Street," Mrs. Thynne, his niece, writes to us. And it was then he began to make London friends. From Mr. Alan S. Cole we have this memorandum: "Whistler as early as 1849, was staying with the Hadens in Sloane Street, and went to one or two children's parties given by the old Dilkes. To these also went my elder sisters and Miss Thackeray, and so met Jimmy. Seymour Haden was our family doctor—with whose family ours was intimate—very much on account of the early relations between my father, his brothers and Seymour Haden, dating from school-days at Christ's Hospital."

Major Whistler, through the summer of 1848, continued his regular inspections of the railroad, though cholera raged. In November he had a bad attack. He recovered, but his health was shaken. Letting neither illness nor weakness interfere with his work, he overtaxed his strength, and on April 9, 1849, he died: the immediate cause heart trouble, which his son inherited from him. He had been employed or consulted in other important undertakings: the iron roof of the Riding House at St. Petersburg and the iron bridge over the Neva, the improvement of the Dvina at Archangel, the fortifications and Naval Arsenal and Docks at Cronstadt. Major Whistler is buried in Evergreen Cemetery, Stonington, where three of his sons have their graves. There is a monument erected to his memory by his friends and fellow officers in Greenwood Cemetery, Brooklyn.

The Emperor suggested, Whistler always said, that the

## IN RUSSIA

two boys should be brought up in the school for the pages of the Court. But Mrs. Whistler determined to take them to their native land, and the Emperor sent her in his private barge as far as the Baltic. She went to the Hadens in Sloane Street, where she found Jamie grown tall and strong. One event in London that helped them to forget for a moment their sorrow was the exhibition at the Royal Academy (1849), then in Trafalgar Square, of Boxall's portrait of Whistler, which they went to see. A short visit to Preston followed, the two boys carried off by "kind Aunt Alicia" to Edinburgh and Glasgow, and at last they all met at Liverpool in August. Mrs. Whistler was undecided between steamer and sailing-packet, the necessity of economy being somewhat urgent on her present income of fifteen hundred dollars a year. By the advice of George Whistler and friends, she took the steamer *America*, and on July 29, 1849, they left Liverpool for New York, where they arrived on August 9, at once taking boat for Stonington.



AUNT KATE

### CHAPTER III. SCHOOL-DAYS IN POMFRET. THE YEARS EIGHTEEN FORTY-NINE TO EIGHTEEN FIFTY-ONE

“THE boys were brought up like little princes until after their father’s death, which changed everything,” Miss Emma W. Palmer, their cousin, writes us. Major Whistler’s salary was large, so were his expenses; we have never heard that there was a pension. He left his family poor: the income of twelve thousand dollars reduced to fifteen hundred

For her own sake, Mrs. Whistler would have preferred to stay at Stonington. For that of her two sons, she settled at Pomfret, Connecticut, where there was a good school, Christ Church Hall. The principal, Rev. Dr. Roswell Park, was a West Point man and like Major Whistler, an engineer, before he became a minister and school teacher. At Pomfret, as at St. Petersburg, Mrs. Whistler busied herself at once to make a home for herself and her children. She could not find, or afford, anything more luxurious than part of an old farmhouse and, in Connecticut, as in Russia, winter is severe. She felt very keenly the discomforts of the new life for her boys, but she spared them nothing of the old discipline. On her first Christmas Day there, she wrote to her mother that she had kept them busy all morning bringing in wood for the fire and listing the draughty doors, though, as a concession to the holiday, she allowed them to lighten their task by hanging up evergreens and to sweeten it with “Stuart’s Candy.” Part of their morning’s duty at other times was,



THE TWO BROTHERS  
*(From a Miniature)*



## SCHOOL-DAYS IN POMFRET

after a snowstorm, to shovel a path from the house to the pig-pen and to feed the pig, even if it sent them back with their hands blue and cold and their feet frost-bitten. While they were thus hardened physically, they were not permitted to neglect their studies. Jimmie was still an "excitable spirit with little perseverance," she wrote to her friends at Alexandrovsky ; however, she would not faint but labour, she said, she urged him on daily, and she "could see already his exertions to overcome habits of indolence." The Scripture studies were continued, and the two boys were made to recite a verse every morning before breakfast. Miss Palmer, who often visited her cousins in the old Pomfret farmhouse and who was their schoolmate during the winter of 1850, remembers above all, that Mrs. Whistler "was very strict with them."

Miss Palmer describes Whistler at this period as

"tall and slight with a pensive, delicate face, shaded by soft brown curls, one lock of which fell over his forehead. . . . He had a somewhat foreign appearance and manner, which, aided by his natural abilities, made him very charming even at that age. . . . He was one of the sweetest, loveliest boys I ever met, and was a great favourite."

The deepest impression he seems to have left on those who knew him at Pomfret was of his talents as a draughtsman, though his fame afterwards may have strengthened and coloured this impression in their memory. He is said to have been always drawing : at times caricatures and comic subjects, at others, illustrations to the books he read, or portraits of his friends, or the Pomfret landscape. Many of his sketches have been preserved, so that their actual merit is not a mere question of hearsay. Some were sent recently to the Buffalo Art Gallery by Miss Park, daughter of Dr. Roswell Park. One is owned by Mrs. Louise Chandler Moulton, who was also one of his schoolmates.

1850]

## JAMES McNEILL WHISTLER

Whistler told us how he used to walk to school with her, carrying her books and basket, and she writes us that he "was very attentive and kind." She also dwells on his great charm, which, "from the beginning, every one who saw him recognised," and his gaiety.

"He was full of fun in those days. The master of the school—Rev. Dr. Roswell Park—was one of the stiffest and most precise of clergymen, and dressed the part most punctiliously. One day Whistler came to school with a high, stiff collar, and a tie or stock precisely copied from Dr. Park's. Of course the school-room was full of suppressed laughter. The reverend gentleman was very angry, but he could hardly take open notice of an offence of that sort. So he bottled up his wrath; but when 'Jimmy'—as we used to call him in those schooldays—gave him some trifling cause of offence, the Rev. Dr. went for him with a ferrule. The school was in two divisions—the girls sitting on one side of the large hall, and the boys on the other. Jimmy (pursued by the Dr. and the ferrule) went round back of the girls' row, and threw himself down on the floor, and the Dr. followed him and whacked him, more, I think, to Jimmy's amusement than to his discomfort."

Mrs. Moulton has further recollections of the maps he drew in geography class, which "were at once the pride and the envy of all the rest of us—they were so perfect, so delicate, so exquisitely dainty in workmanship." He gave her a number of drawings, all lost except one, in sepia, called *The Light at the Door*, which she lent to the Whistler Memorial Exhibition at Boston, 1904.

Other drawings done at Pomfret were in the same exhibition. Twenty-two in black and white and water-colour were lent by Dr. Samuel Hammond, whose father was another schoolmate of Whistler's. They suggest no small acquaintance with the French illustrators of the day. To the London Memorial Exhibition, 1905, Mrs. William Whistler sent two water-colours of this period and a pen drawing: *A School House on Fire, Sam Weller's Lodging in the Fleet*



DRAWINGS MADE AT POMFRET  
(Pen and Ink)



## SCHOOL-DAYS IN POMFRET

*Prison*, and *Benedictine Monks*. Many more, no doubt, could be traced. But the early work of Whistler, which we have seen, does not strike us as remarkable. It has its historic importance, but shows no more evidence of genius than the early work of any other great artist.



St. Augustine

## CHAPTER IV. WEST POINT. THE YEARS EIGHTEEN FIFTY-ONE TO EIGHTEEN FIFTY-FOUR

**T**HOUGH Whistler's mother took pride and pleasure in his drawing, she did not see in art a career for him. He inherited a profession more distinguished in her eyes. Many Whistlers and McNeills had been soldiers. West Point had made of them the men—the Americans—they were; West Point must do the same for him. Through the influence of George Whistler with Daniel Webster, it is said, his appointment as cadet At Large was obtained from President Fillmore, and on July 1, 1851, after Whistler had been two years at the Pomfret school, within ten days of his seventeenth birthday, he entered the United States Military Academy at West Point, where General Robert E. Lee was Commandant.

Miss Palmer thinks he went against his will, though he never regretted having gone. He was not made for the army, any more than Giotto for Tuscan pastures or Corot for a Paris shop. It was reasonable that his family should try to make him a soldier; it was inevitable that they should fail. But his three years at West Point were an experience he would not have missed.

Officially, the experiment was disastrous. The record sent to us from West Point by Colonel C. W. Larned is meagre, because, as Whistler did not graduate, his biography is not in the *Cullum Registry of Graduates*, nor in the graduating records of the Adjutant's Office.

## WEST POINT

"He entered July 1, 1851, under the name of James A. (Abbot) Whistler; aged at the time sixteen years and eleven months. He was appointed At Large and his place of residence was in Pomfret, Windham Co., Connecticut. At the end of his second year's course, in 1853, he was absent with leave on account of ill health. On June 16, 1854, he was discharged from the Academy for deficiency in chemistry. At that time he stood at the head of his class in drawing and No. 39 in philosophy, the total number in the class being 43. He recorded his place of birth as Massachusetts."

The Professor of Drawing at the time was Robert W. Weir, who always held Whistler in high esteem. Mr. J. Alden Weir, his son, writes us :

"I remember, as a boy, my father showing me his work, which at that time hung in what was known as the Gallery of the Drawing Academy. There were about ten works by him framed. From the start he showed evidences of a talent which later proved to be unique in those fine and rare qualities, hard to be understood by the majority."

Brigadier-General Alexander S. Webb, one of Whistler's class-mates, who for long sat next him in the drawing-school, told a story of master and pupil to Mr. Gustave Kobbé :

"In the art class one day, while Whistler was busy over an India ink drawing of a French peasant girl, Weir walked, as usual, from desk to desk, examining the pupils' work. After looking over Whistler's shoulder he stepped back to his own desk filled his brush with India ink (General Webb says he can see him now, rubbing the colour on a plate before 'loading') and approached Whistler with a view of correcting some of the lines in the latter's drawing. When Whistler saw him coming, he raised his hands as if to ward off the strokes of his brush and called out, 'Oh, don't sir, don't! You'll spoil it!'"

Mr. William M. Chase, who read, or heard, the story, says that he told it to Whistler and asked if there was any truth in it? "Well, you know he would have!" was Whistler's answer. And the best part of it all is that Professor Weir understood. He is reported to have said nothing, but,  
1854]

## JAMES McNEILL WHISTLER

smiling, to have let the drawing go uncorrected. He was not always so forbearing, however, as Colonel Larned explains :

“ I have here two drawings made by Whistler in his course of instruction in drawing, one of which is a water-colour copy of a coloured print, without special merit or interest, and evidently much touched up by Professor Weir, as was his wont ; another, a pen-and-ink copy taken from a coloured print, quite brilliant and masterful in execution, which I presented to the officers’ mess. I do not set much stock by the coloured sketch, for the reason that it bears the ear-marks all over it of Weir’s retouching finish. It was his habit to touch up all water-colour efforts of the cadets for the examination exhibition, and I don’t believe Whistler at that time had any such facility in colour work as is indicated in the touching-up in this drawing. With my knowledge of my predecessor’s universal practice in this regard, in which we instructors followed suit to the best of our ability, I have always been suspicious of its integrity. At the same time Whistler was head in drawing, and it may be that Weir forbore in his case and allowed it to stand. The pen and ink, however, must have been his own interpretation of a coloured lithograph, and shows such facility that it makes me hesitate regarding my libel of the other.

“ Whistler did another water-colour of a monk seated at a table by a window writing. This is also a copy of an old print which was used by Weir, with the others, through successive classes. I think it was — who saw the thing and wrote a lot of tommy-rot and hifalutin about its subjective qualities, and Whistler’s satiric genius, and his introduction in the monk’s face of that of his room-mate, and a whole lot of esoteric subtleties, assuming it to have been an original production. As a matter of fact, I have copies of the same thing by cadets in my souvenir gallery, all touched up by Weir, and I fancy about as good as Whistler’s.”

Of these two West Point drawings, copies probably of lithographs by Nash or Haghe, only one gives more promise than the earlier Pomfret performances. The water-colour is of no account at all. The pen drawing has in it the beginning of the handling of his etchings.\*

\* Five drawings, four of *An Hour in the Life of a Cadet* in pen-and-ink and one of *An Encampment* in wash, have lately been found at West Point. The Cadet drawings are far the best of his early work that we have seen and we reproduce them.



DRAWING MADE AT WEST POINT

*(Pen and Ink)*



## WEST POINT

Of his other studies there is little to record except his failure. In his third year he was found deficient in chemistry, and we give Colonel's Larned's account of the incident :

"Whistler said : ' Had silicon been a gas, I would have been a major-general.' He was called up for examination on the subject of chemistry, which also covered the studies of mineralogy and geology, and given silicon to discuss. When called upon to recite, he started : ' I am required to discuss the subject of silicon. Silicon is a gas.' ' That will do, Mr. Whistler,' and he retired quickly to private life."

Another story is of an examination in history. " What ! " said his examiner, " you do not know the date of the Battle of Buena Vista ? Suppose you were to go out to dinner and the company began to talk of the Mexican War, and you, a West Point man, were asked the date of the battle. What would you do ? " " Do," said Whistler, " why, I should refuse to associate with people who could talk of such things at dinner ! "

Whistler's horsemanship is said to have been hardly better than his chemistry. It was not wholly unusual, according to General Webb, for Whistler at cavalry drill to go sliding over his horse's head. On such occasions, Major Sackett, then in command, would call out : " Mr. Whistler, aren't you a little ahead of the squad ? " According to Whistler's version to us, Major Sackett's remark was : " Mr. Whistler, I am pleased to see you for once at the head of your class ! " " But I did it gracefully," Whistler always insisted. There are traditions of his fall when trotting in his first mounted drill, and the astonishment of the dragoon who ran to carry him off to hospital, on his rising unhurt with the one complaint that he didn't " see how any man could keep a horse for amusement." Once Whistler had to ride a difficult horse called " Quaker." " Dragoon, what horse is this ? " " Quaker," said the soldier. " Well, he's no friend ! " said Whistler.

## JAMES McNEILL WHISTLER

His observance of the regulations was often as bad as his horsemanship, and his excuses for it were worse. General Ruggles, a class-mate, tells of the discovery of a pair of boots which were against the regulation, and of his writing a long explanation, winding up with the argument that, as this demerit added but a little to the whole number, "what boots it?"

General Langdon writes us :

"The widow of a Colonel Thompson occupied a set of officer's quarter's at the 'Point,' and, to eke out her slender pension, had been allowed to take ten or twelve cadets to board, furnishing meals only. Very soon after his admission to the Academy, Whistler discovered that the fare of the cadets was not up to his delicate taste, and he applied for permission to take his meals at Mrs. Thompson's. Now, though her house was in the row of the officers' quarters and the nearest to the cadet barracks, being only a few steps distant, it was 'off cadet limits' except for the boarders there when at their meals. One balmy evening, long after supper, our friend Whistler was discovered by Mrs. Thompson, leaning over her rear fence, engaged in an animated discourse in the French language with her pretty French maid. Mrs. Thompson, in a severe tone, inquired his business there at that hour. Whistler promptly replied: 'I am looking for my cat!' It was well known that cadets were not allowed to keep cats, dogs or other pets. The absurdity of Whistler's answer deprived it of all turpitude, but the old lady, between amazement and anger, nearly had a fit. As soon as she could recover her powers of speech, she gasped out: 'Young man, go 'way!' and cut short the harmless confab by sending the pretty maid indoors. Of course, poor Whistler took no more meals at Mrs. Thompson's, but was, instead, ordered to take his nourishment in the cadet's mess hall, where the fare in those days was far from being inviting."

Sir Rennell Rodd tells us another story that he had from Whistler :

"The cadets were out early one morning, engaged in surveying round the college. It was very cold and raw, and Jimmy, finding a line of deep ditch through which he could make a retiring movement, got back into college and his warm quarters unperceived.

ELEMENTS OF GEOMETRY AND TRIGONOMETRY, BY A. M. LEGENDRE.

# GEOMETRY AND TRIGONOMETRY,

FROM THE WORKS OF

A. M. LEGENDRE.

REVISED AND ADAPTED TO THE USE OF MATHEMATICAL INSTITUTIONS IN

BY CHARLES DAVIES, LL.D.,

OF THE UNIVERSITY OF MICHIGAN, AND OF THE UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA.

A. B. 1

PUBLISHED BY J. W. DERRY & CO.,  
NO. 51 JOHN-STREET,  
CINCINNATI.

It is in the above capacity.

TITLE-PAGE OF GEOMETRY-BOOK, WITH PENCIL SKETCHES BY WHISTLER

The Whistle will not put ~~the~~ <sup>the</sup> new training.  
The Whistle's album on sketches from within  
14 days - the stars no trace of Whistle's to be  
kind in 18th day - at Whistle's Star.  
Be I believe in Whistle's Whistle's Star.

The Whistle is required to show the stars in order to be  
understandable to the public - after making the Whistle's Star.



## WEST POINT

By an unfortunate accident a roll-call was held that morning, Cadet Whistler not being present, a report was drawn up sending in his name to the commanding officer for being absent from parade without the knowledge or permission of his instructor ; the report was shown him, and he said to the military instructor : ‘ Have I your permission to speak ? ’ ‘ Speak on, Cadet Whistler.’ ‘ You have reported me, sir, for being absent from parade without the knowledge or permission of my instructor—well, now, if I was absent without your knowledge or permission, how did you know I was absent ? ’ They got into terms after that, and the incident was closed.”

The stories about Whistler at West Point might be multiplied indefinitely. Many have been already published. Those we tell suffice to show that at the Military Academy, as wherever he passed, the impression he left was vivid. We have a stronger proof of this in the letters written to us by several officers who were Whistler’s fellow cadets. It is half a century since they and Whistler studied together, and, with one exception, they never saw him in later years, yet their memory of him is still fresh. General D. McN. Gregg and General C. B. Comstock, his classmates, General Loomis L. Langdon, General Henry L. Abbot, General Oliver Otis Howard, General G. W. C. Lee, in the class before his, have all sent us recollections of Whistler at West Point. Their letters are too valuable not to give in full, but too long to insert here, and we reserve them therefore for an Appendix. The great interest is to find that these distinguished officers agree thoroughly in their affection for Whistler, their appreciation of his gaiety and charm, and their respect for the drawings he made even in those early days. He was “ a vivacious and likeable little fellow,” as General Comstock describes him, and we get a picture of him, short and slight, not over military in his bearing, somewhat foreign in appearance, near-sighted, and with thick black curls that won him the name of “ Curly ” among the Cadets. His old friends

1854]

## JAMES McNEILL WHISTLER

remember his wit, his "pranks"; his fondness for cooking and the excellence of his dishes; his excursions "after taps," for buckwheat cakes and oysters or ice-cream and soda-water to "Joe's" and, for heavier fare, to "Benny Haven's," a mile away, where to be found was a serious offence; they remember his indifference to discipline, and the number of his demerits which they are at pains to excuse as "not indicating any moral obliquity," but due to such harmless faults as "lates," "absences," "clothing out of order"; best of all, they remember his drawings: his caricatures of the cadets, the Board of Visitors, the masters, his sketches of all kinds scribbled over the margins of his text-books, his illustrations to Dickens, to Dumas, to Victor Hugo. General Langdon recalls a picture that he and Whistler painted in collaboration, Whistler putting in the figures. Whistler gave his drawings away generously, and many have been preserved. Even the cover of an old geometry book, in which he sketched at odd moments and once noted some boyish bets with General Webb, was always kept by his room-mate, Frederick L. Childs (*Les Enfants*, Whistler nicknamed him), and is now kept as carefully by Mr. Thomas Childs, his son, who has kindly lent it to us. All these things point to the affection in which Whistler was held.

Whistler looked back to West Point with equal affection. He failed, but West Point coloured his after-years and was the basis of his code of conduct. As a "West Point man" he met every emergency, and his bearing, his carriage, showed the influence of those days when, as he liked to look back to himself, he was "very dandy in grey." For the discipline, the tradition, the tone of the Academy, he never lost his respect. He knew what it could do in making men of the boys appointed to it. "From the moment we came," he said, when telling us of West Point, "we were United States Officers, not school-boys, not college students. We were



SAM WELLER'S LODGING IN THE FLEET PRISON  
(*Water-Colour*)



ON POST DUTY AT WEST POINT  
(*Wash Drawing*)



## WEST POINT

ruled, not by little school or college rules, but by our honour, by our deference to the unwritten law of tradition." He resented the least innovation that threatened the hold of this tradition over the cadets. To take a cadet into court was destruction to the whole *morale* of West Point, he declared, the old way was better, when it was such a disgrace to offend against the unwritten laws that the offender's career was ruined. In the most trivial matters, he deplored any deviation from the old standard. That was the reason of his indignation when he heard that the cadets were playing football, and, worse, were having matches with college teams: to put themselves on the level of students was beneath the dignity of officers of the United States. During our war with Spain, during the Boers' struggle in South Africa, there was not an event, not a rumour, that he did not refer for judgment to West Point and its code. The Spanish War, though "no doubt, we should never have gone into it, was quite the most wonderful, the most beautiful war since Louis XIV.; never in modern times has there been such a war, and all because it was conducted on correct West Point principles, with the most perfect courtesy and dignity on both sides, and the greatest chivalry." When he came back to London from Corsica in 1901, and was telling us of the people and the way they clung to old custom and ceremonial, he said that really he had found "the Roman tradition almost as fine as the West Point tradition," and this was indeed a concession. We never knew him to show the least desire to return to Lowell or Stonington, to Pomfret or Washington, but he always said, "If I ever make the journey to America, I will go straight to Baltimore, then to West Point, and then sail for England again." One evening we asked him to meet an officer who had just come from West Point. His interest could not have been keener had he left the Academy the day before.

## JAMES McNEILL WHISTLER

He wanted to know about everything—the buildings, the life, the discipline. He resented each and every innovation, above all football. West Point to him was in danger when cadets could stoop to dispute “with college students for a dirty ball kicked round a muddy field.” This was the shadow thrown over his pleasure when he heard of the pride the Academy took in claiming him, and of his reputation there: his drawings hanging in places of honour, a room always ready for him. It was the military side of the Academy, however, that stirred him to enthusiasm. His face fell, when, asking the officer who, like Major Whistler, was in the Artillery, “Professor of Tactics, I suppose?” and the officer answered, “No, of French.” One other way he showed his affection for the Military Academy was by sending to the library a copy of *Whistler v. Ruskin: Art and Art Critics*. In it, Dr. Holden, the librarian, informs us, are autograph notes, and on the title-page the inscription: “From an old cadet whose pride it is to remember his West Point days.” This is signed with the Butterfly, and at the end of the book he pasted in newspaper cuttings about the trial. The authorities at West Point, on their side, have honoured him by allowing a memorial tablet, one of St. Gaudens’ last works, to be placed in the library of the Academy.

But it needs more than respect and love for the Military Academy to make a soldier, and Whistler was, as Poe had been before him, an alien at West Point. It was no question of the number of his demerits or of his ignorance of chemistry and history: he had something else to do in life.

## CHAPTER V. THE COAST SURVEY. THE YEARS EIGHTEEN FIFTY-FOUR TO EIGHTEEN FIFTY-FIVE

WHEN Whistler left West Point in 1854, he had not only to face the disappointment of his mother, but to find another career. Miss Davis writes us that she remembers seeing Whistler at Scarsdale, West Chester County, New York, where Mrs. Whistler had a house for the summer, "sitting very quietly in a dark corner of the piazza, and I have thought since that he had probably just come from West Point." It was bad enough to have disappointed his mother; to make it worse, the new plan now was to apprentice him to Mr. Winans in the locomotive works at Baltimore.

Mr. Frederick B. Miles writes us :

"It was in 1854 that I first met him in Baltimore, when he had just left West Point, at the house of Thomas Winans, who had returned from Russia and built a beautiful house on the very grounds where I had been for several years at the French school of M. Boursaud. I was then apprenticed to the loco works of old Mr. Ross Winans, Thomas Winans' father. Jem Whistler's elder brother, George Whistler, was a friend of my family; had been superintendent of the New York and New Haven Railroad (was an engineer) and had married Miss Julia Winans, sister of Thomas Winans, then came into the loco works as partner and superintendent. I was in the drawing-room under him.

"Whistler was staying with Tom Winans mainly, and sometimes with his brother, George Whistler. They were all perplexed at his 'flightiness'—*wanted him* to enter the loco works. His younger brother William *was* an apprentice in the works along  
1854]

## JAMES McNEILL WHISTLER

with me, and also a cousin, John McNeill. But Jem never really *worked* in the locomotive business. He spent much of his several short stays and two long ones in Baltimore loitering in his peculiar *bizarre* way about the drawing office and shops, and at my drawing desk in Tom Winans' house. We all had boards with paper, carefully stretched, which Jem would cover with tentative sketches to our great disgust, obliging us to stretch fresh ones, but we loved him all the same! He would also ruin all our best pencils! sketching not only on the paper, but also on the smoothly finished wooden backs of the drawing-boards which, I think, he preferred to the paper side. We kept some of the sketches for a long time. I had a beauty—a cavalier in a dungeon cell, with one small window high up—Rembrandt effects and a little bird on the window, *à la* Silvio Pellico's *Rondinello Pellegrino*!—perhaps inspired by it? I think he afterwards painted a picture like it, but I could never find it. In all his work at that time he was very Rembrandtesque, but of course only amateurish. Nevertheless he *was studying and working out effects*."

Whistler saw enough of the locomotive works to know that he did not want to be an apprentice, and it was not long before he left Baltimore for Washington and the Coast Survey. When he told us of his experiences there, he spoke as if he had gone to Washington straight from West Point. He was with us on the evening of September 15, 1900, after the news had come from the Transvaal of President Kruger's flight, and our talking of it led him back to West Point, and so to the story of his days in the service of the Government. He had followed the Boer War with intense interest.

"The Boers are as fine as Southerners—their fighting would be no discredit to West Point [and he was indignant with us for looking upon Kruger's flight as diplomatically, a blunder]. Diplomatically it was right, you know; the one thing Kruger should have done, just as, in that other amazing campaign, flight had been the one thing for Jefferson Davis, a southern gentleman—who had the code. I will always remember the courtesy shown me by Jefferson Davis, through whom I got my appointment in the Coast Survey.

## THE COAST SURVEY

"It was after my little difference with the Professor of Chemistry at West Point. The professor would not agree with me that silicon was a gas, but declared it was a metal,—and as we could come to no agreement in the matter, it was suggested—all in the most courteous and correct West Point way—that perhaps I had better leave the Academy. Well, you know, it was not a moment for the return of the prodigal to his family or for any slaying of fatted calves.—I had to work, and I went to Washington. —There, I called at once on Jefferson Davis, who was Secretary of War—a West Point man like myself. He was most charming and I—well, from my Russian cradle, I had an idea of things, and the interview was in every way correct—conducted on both sides with the utmost dignity and elegance. I explained my unfortunate difference with the Professor of Chemistry—represented that the question was one of no vital importance—while on all really important questions I had carried off more than the necessary marks. My explanation made, I suggested that I should be re-instated at West Point, in which case, as far as I was concerned, silicon should remain a metal. The Secretary, courteous to the end, promised to consider the matter, and named a day for a second interview.

"Before I went back to the Secretary of War, I called on the Secretary of the Navy, also a Southerner, James C. Dobbin, of South Carolina, suggesting that I should have an appointment in the Navy. The Secretary objected that I was too young. In the confidence of youth, I said age should be no objection; I 'could be entered at the Naval Academy, and the three years at West Point would count at Annapolis.' The Secretary was interested, for he too had a sense of things. He regretted, with gravity, the impossibility. But something impressed him; for later, he reserved one of six appointments he had to make in the Marines and offered it to me. In the meantime, I had returned to the Secretary of War, who had decided that it was impossible to meet my wishes in the matter of West Point; West Point discipline had to be observed, and if one cadet were re-instated, a dozen others who had tumbled out after me, would have to be re-instated too. But if I would call on Captain Benham, of the Coast Survey, a post might be waiting for me there."

Captain Benham was an old friend of Major Whistler's, and Whistler was engaged in the drawing division of the  
1854]

## JAMES McNEILL WHISTLER

United States Coast and Geodetic Survey, at the salary of a dollar and a half a day. This appointment he received on November 7, 1854, six months after he had left West Point.

Of this place, and his work in it, Whistler said but little. His adventures with the Secretaries of War and of the Navy amused him—they were ordered so entirely after the West Point code. There was nothing whatever to appeal to him in the routine of an office. What he had to do, he did, but with no enthusiasm.

“I was apt to be late, I was so busy socially. I lived in a small room, but it was amazing how I was asked and went everywhere—to balls, to the Legations, to all that was going on. Labouchère, an *attaché* at the British Legation, has never ceased to talk of me, so gay, going everywhere, and, when I had not a dress suit pinning up the tails of my black frock-coat, and turning it into a dress-coat for the occasion. Shocking.”

Mr. Labouchère has told this story in print, and also in a letter to us :

“I did know Whistler very well in America about fifty years ago. But he was then a young man at Washington, who—if I remember rightly—had not been able to pass his examination at West Point and had given no indication of his future fame. He was rather hard up, I take it, for I remember that he pinned back the skirt of a frock-coat to make it pass as a dress-coat at evening parties. Washington was then a very small place compared with what it is now, where everybody—so to say—knew everybody, and the social parties were of a very simple character. This is really all that I remember of Whistler at that time, except that he was thought witty and paradoxically amusing !”

But long before this, there was something in his dress which drew attention to him. Though he was never seen in the “high-standing collar and silk hat” of the time, some remember him in a Scotch cap and grey shawl, then the fashion; others recall a slouch hat and circular cloak, his coat, unbuttoned, showing his waistcoat; while traditions

## THE COAST SURVEY

of his social charm and gaiety come from every side. Adjutant-General Breck is responsible for the story of Whistler having once invited the Russian Minister—others say the *Chargé d’Affaires*—Edward de Stoeckl, to dine with him, carrying the Minister off in his own carriage, doing the marketing by the way, and cooking the dinner before his guest in the room in the house where he lived. And it has been said that never was the Minister entertained by so brilliant a host while in Washington.

Mr. Kobbé obtained much information from the late A. Lindenkohl, a fellow draughtsman in the Coast Survey. Whistler lodged in a house at the north-east corner of E. and Twelfth Streets: “a two-story brick building with attic. He occupied a plainly but comfortably furnished room, such as could then have been rented for about ten dollars a month.” The office records show that he worked six and one half days in January, and five and three-fourth days in February. And he usually arrived late; but, he would say, really it was not his fault; he was not too late, it was the office that opened too early. Lindenkohl described an effort to reform him:

“Captain Benham, who was then in charge of the office, took occasion to tell me that he felt great interest in the young man, not only on account of his talents, but also on account of his father, who was his particular friend, and he told me that he would be highly pleased if I could induce Whistler to be more regular in his attendance. ‘Call at his lodgings on your way to the office,’ he said, ‘and see if you can’t bring him along.’

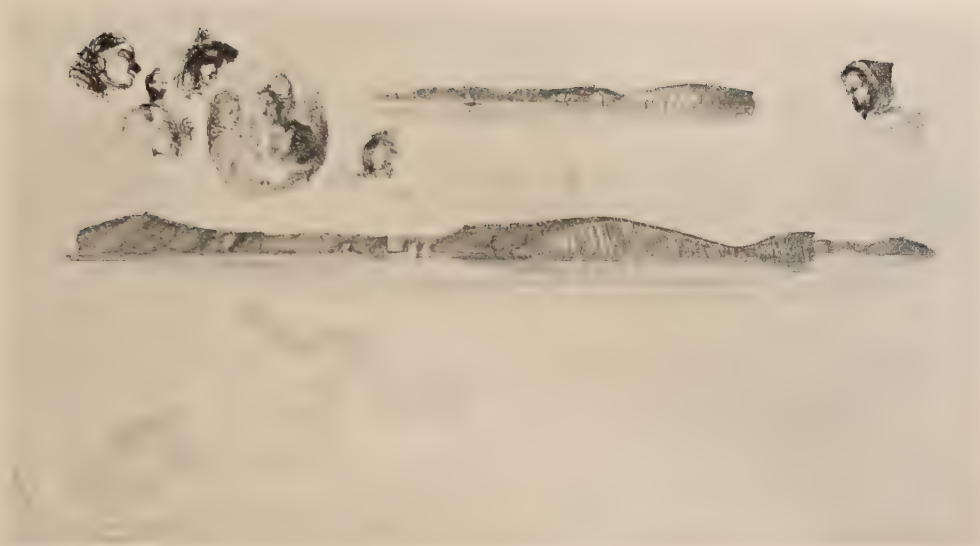
“Accordingly, one morning, I called at Whistler’s lodgings at half-past eight. No doubt he felt somewhat astonished, but received me with the greatest *bonhomie*, invited me to make myself at home and promised to make all possible haste to comply with my wishes. Nevertheless he proceeded with the greatest deliberation to rise from his couch and put himself into shape for the street and prepare his breakfast, which consisted of a cup of strong coffee brewed in a steam-tight French machine,

## JAMES McNEILL WHISTLER

then a novelty ; and also insisted upon treating me with a cup of coffee. We made no extra haste on our way to the office, which we reached about half-past ten—an hour and a half after time. I did not repeat the experiment. . . . Whistler was possessed of an elegant figure with an abundance of black curly hair, soft lustrous eyes, finely cut features, fair complexion, well-shaped hands and a graceful *tournure*. I thought him about the handsomest fellow I ever met ; but for some reasons I did not consider him a perfect model of manly beauty—his mouth betokened more ease than firmness, his brow more reserve than acute mental activity, and his eyes more depth than penetration. Sensitiveness and animation appeared to be his predominating traits.”

Lindenkohl also said that Whistler already spoke of Paris with enthusiasm, that he made landscapes, sketched sometimes from the office windows, and studies of people, always taking the greatest interest in the arrangement and folds of their clothes. Whistler showed him “several examples done with the brush in sepia, in old French or Spanish styles,” whatever this may mean. Another draughtsman in the office recalled Whistler sketching even on the walls as he went downstairs. And, though in Washington only a few months, he left there, as everywhere, an impression of his gaiety, his charm, his indifference to work except in the one form in which work interested him.

If nothing else were known of this period, it would be memorable for the technical instruction he received in the Coast Survey. His work was the drawing and etching of Government topographical plans and maps, which have to be made with the utmost accuracy and sharpness of line. His training, therefore, was in the hardest and most perfect school of etching in the world, a fact never, until now, clearly pointed out. The work was dull, altogether mechanical, and he sometimes relieved the dullness by filling empty spaces on the plates with sketches of his own. Captain Benham told him plainly, Whistler said, that he was not



THE COAST SURVEY, No. 1  
(Etching)



COAST SURVEY, No. 2, ANACAPA ISLAND  
(Etching)



## THE COAST SURVEY

there to spoil Government coppers, and ordered all the designs to be immediately erased. Other accounts have been given but this was Whistler's account to us.\* Only two plates have been as yet, or probably ever will be, found that can be attributed to him, wholly or in part. These are *Coast Survey, No. 1*, and *Coast Survey, No. 2, Anacapa Island*. They are undescribed by Mr. Wedmore, though referred to in his preface to the *Catalogue of Whistler's Etchings*. They were first described in the *Catalogue of the Whistler Memorial Exhibition* in London, 1905. The *Coast Survey, No. 1*, brought him neither credit nor into the graces of the Coast Survey officials. It is a plate giving two parallel views, one above the other, of the coast line of a rocky shore, the lower showing a small town in a deep bay, with, below them both to the extreme left, the profile of the same coast. Whistler was unable to confine himself to the Government requirements. In the lower design, chimneys are gaily smoking, and on the upper part of the plate, several figures, obviously reminiscent of prints and drawings he had seen, are sketched : an old peasant woman, a man in a tall Italian hat, another in a Sicilian bonnet, a mother and child in an oval, a battered French soldier, a bearded monk in an elaborate cowl. The drawing is schoolboy-like, though it shows certain observation, but the biting is remarkable. The little figures are bitten as well and in the same way as in *La Vieille aux Loques*, etched three or four years afterwards : to look at them is to know that Whistler was a consummate etcher technically before he left the Coast Survey. There is no advance in the biting of the French series. So astonishing is this mastery that, if the technique in some of the French plates were not so similar, one would be tempted to doubt whether Whistler really etched those little figures in Washington, especially

\* Since this was written, Mr. John R. Key has published an article, *Recollections of Whistler* in the *Century Magazine* for April 1908, in which he says that this plate was merely an experimental one, such as beginners were allowed to work upon. 1854]

## JAMES McNEILL WHISTLER

as the plate is unsigned. The plate escaped by chance. Whistler's friend and fellow draughtsman, Mr. John R. Key, to whom it was given to clean off and use again, asked to keep it, and it was sold to him for the price of old copper. The second plate, *Anacapa Island*, is signed by several engravers. Whistler, most likely, etched the view of the eastern extremity of the island, for many lines on the rocky shore resemble the work in the French series, and also the two flights of birds which, though they enliven the design, have no topographical value. This plate was finished and published. There is said to be a third plate, a chart of the Delaware River, but we have never seen it and can find out nothing about it. Mr. E. G. Kennedy and Mr. Frederick Keppel have shown us tiny drawings and prints of soldiers and other figures which they believe were done at this time.

One other record of Whistler at the Coast Survey remains, but of a very different kind. He liked to tell the story. Captain Benham used to come and look through the small magnifying glass each draughtsman in this department had to work with. One day, Whistler etched a little devil on the glass, and Captain Benham looked through it at the plate. Whistler described himself to us, at the moment, lying full length on a sort of mattress or trestle, so as not to touch the copper. But he saw Captain Benham give a jump. The Captain said nothing. He pocketed the glass, and that was all Whistler heard of it until many years afterwards when, one day, an old gentleman appeared at his studio in Paris, and by way of introduction took from his watch-chain a tiny magnifying glass, and asked Whistler to look through it—"and," he said, "well—we recognised each other perfectly."

Captain Benham is dead, but his son, Major H. H. Benham, writes us: "I have heard my father tell the story. He was

## THE COAST SURVEY

very fond of Whistler and thought most highly of his great ability—or rather genius, I should say.”

Genius like Whistler's served him as little at the Coast Survey as at West Point. He resigned in February 1855. His brother, George Whistler, and Mr. Winans tried harder than ever to make him enter the locomotive works in Baltimore. He was now about twenty-one, old enough at last to insist upon what he wanted, and what he wanted was to study art. Already at St. Petersburg, his ability had struck his mother's friends. At Pomfret and at West Point, he owed to his drawing whatever distinction he had attained. And there had been things done outside of school and Academy and office work he told us :

“Portraits of my cousin Annie Denny and of Tom Winans, and many paintings at Stonington that Stonington people remembered so well they looked me up in Paris afterwards. Indeed, all the while, ever since my Russian days, there had been always the thought of art, and when at last I told the family that I was going to Paris, they said nothing. There was no difficulty. They just got me a ticket. I was to have three hundred and fifty dollars (seventy pounds) a year, and my step-brother, George Whistler, who was one of my guardians, sent it to me after that regularly every quarter.”

## CHAPTER VI. STUDENT DAYS IN THE LATIN QUARTER. THE YEARS EIGHTEEN FIFTY-FIVE TO EIGHTEEN FIFTY-NINE

WHISTLER arrived in Paris before the end of the summer of 1855. There he fell among friends. The American Legation was open to the son of Major Whistler. It was the year of the first great French Exhibition, and Sir Henry Cole, the British Commissioner, as well as the Thackerays, were in Paris. Mrs. Richmond Ritchie, who remembers meeting him, writes :

“I wish I had a great deal more to tell you about Whistler. I always enjoyed talking to him when we were both hobbledehoys at Paris; he used to ask me to dance, and rather to my disappointment perhaps, for, much as I liked talking to him, I preferred dancing, we used to stand out while the rest of the party polkaed and waltzed by. There was a certain definite authority in the things he said, even as a boy. I can't remember what they were, but I somehow realised that what he said mattered. When I heard afterwards of his fanciful freaks and quirks, I could not fit them in with my impression of the wise young oracle of my own age.”

According to Mr. F. B. Miles, Whistler's brother George wanted him to study at the Ecole des Beaux-Arts, but there is no record of his ever having been admitted. He went instead to the studio which Gleyre inherited from Delaroche and afterwards handed down to Gérôme, and which drew to it the students who did not crowd to Couture and Ary Scheffer. It was not extraordinary, as some have said, that Whistler should have gone there; it would have been extraordinary

## IN THE LATIN QUARTER

had he stayed away. He arrived in Paris just when Courbet, refused at the Exhibition, was defying convention with his first show and his first "Manifesto," and many of the younger men were throwing over Romanticism to follow him as Realists. Whistler quickly found himself more in sympathy with the followers of Courbet than with Gleyre's pupils, and he became so intimate with the group, among whom were Fantin and Degas, who studied under Lecocq de Boisbaudran that it is sometimes thought he must have been their fellow student. But on his arrival in Paris, the young American probably had heard neither of Lecocq de Boisbaudran nor Courbet, and Gleyre was the popular teacher. Fantin-Latour, in some notes made shortly before his death, which have been handed to us, and M. Duret both say that they seldom, if ever, heard Whistler speak of Gleyre's. When we asked him about it, he seemed to have nothing to recall save the dignified principles upon which the *atelier* was conducted. There was not even the usual tormenting of the *nouveau*. "If a man were a decent fellow, and would sing his song, and take a little chaff, he had no trouble," and this agrees with Du Maurier's description in *Trilby* of Carrel's, which was Gleyre's. Whistler could remember only one disagreeable incident, and that was not in connection with a *nouveau*, but with a student who had been there some time, and was putting on airs. One morning he came to the studio late,

"and there were all the students working away very hard, the unpopular man among them, and there, at the end of the room, on the model's stand, was an enormous catafalque, the unpopular one's name on it in big, staring letters. And no one said a word. But that killed him. He was never again seen in the place."

Gleyre was by no means colourless as a teacher. He is now remembered chiefly as a legitimate successor to David and the Classicists, but he held theories disquieting to the

1855-59 I : D 49

## JAMES McNEILL WHISTLER

academic mind. He taught that, before a picture was begun, the colours should be arranged on the palette: in this way, he said, difficulties were overcome, for once the work was started, attention could then be given unreservedly to the drawing and modelling of the subject on the canvas in colour. It was the system Whistler endeavoured to follow all his life.\* He taught also that ivory black is the basis of all tones, which was a heresy to those who listened. Upon this preparation of the palette and this basis of black—black “the universal harmoniser”—thought a heresy in his case too, Whistler founded his life-long practice as painter and his teaching when he, in his turn, became a master, and visited the pupils of the Académie Carmen. In fact, as he has told us over and over, his practice of a lifetime was founded on what he learned as a boy, on the methods he never abandoned. He only developed methods, misunderstood by all those prophets, who have said he had but enough knowledge for his own needs.

Whistler spoke often to us of the men he met at Gleyre's: Poynter, Du Maurier, Lamont, Joseph Rowley. Leighton, in 1855, was studying at Couture's, developing his theory that “the best dodge is to be a devil of a clever fellow.” Mrs. Barrington says Leighton made Whistler's acquaintance at the time and admired Whistler's etchings. But Whistler never recalled Leighton among his fellow students, though he spoke often, and with affection, of Thomas Armstrong, who worked at Ary Scheffer's, and Aleco Ionides, not an

\* “Il recommandait de faire des tons d'avance sur la palette,” Clément writes in his life of Gleyre, 1878; “on mêlait les couleurs, on faisait des paquets de couleur de chair, et on s'en servait comme on se serait servi d'un ton d'ambre monochrome. Ceci avait pour but de séparer les difficultés. La question de la couleur devait être plus ou moins résolue par ces préparations préalable, et l'attention pouvait se porter plus directement sur le modèle et sur le dessin. . . . Parfois il disait des choses qui ressemblait à des hérésies; on se les répétait, car on savait bien que c'étaient des hyperboles. Ainsi, un jour, il dit: ‘Le noir d'ivoire est la base des tons.’”

## IN THE LATIN QUARTER

art student but studying, no one seemed to know what or where. This is the group of *Trilby*, Du Maurier's sentimental echo of *La Vie de Bohème*. Lamont, "the Laird" of *Trilby*, and Aleco Ionides, "the Greek," are dead. It is regrettable that Du Maurier published his spite against Whistler and so wrecked what Whistler had imagined a genuine friendship. Sir Edward J. Poynter, Mr. Armstrong and Mr. Rowley remain. The two latter have given us their impressions of Whistler at the time, and so has Mr. Luke Ionides, then studying for the Diplomatic Service :

"I first knew Jimmie Whistler in Paris. It was in the month of August 1855. My younger brother was staying there with a tutor, and had made friends with Jimmie. He was just twenty-one years old, full of life and 'go,' always ready for fun, good-natured and good-tempered—he wore a peculiar straw hat slightly on the side of his head—it had a low crown and a broad brim."

Whistler etched a portrait of himself in this hat, which startled even artists and students and became a legend in the *Quartier*. It was, apparently, the first plate he made in Paris.

Mr. Rowley ("Taffy") writes us :

"It was in 1857-8 that I knew Whistler, and a most amusing and eccentric fellow he was, with his long, black, thick, curly hair, and large felt hat with a broad black ribbon round it. I remember on the wall of the *atelier* was a representation of him, I believe done by Du Maurier, a sketch of him, then a fainter one, and then merely a note of interrogation—very clever it was and very like the original. In those days he did not work *hard*, and I have a faint recollection of seeing a head painted by him in deep Rembrandtish tones which was thought very good indeed. He was always smoking cigarettes, which he made himself, and his droll sayings caused us no end of fun. I don't think he stayed long in any rooms. One day he told us he had taken a new one, and he was fitting it up *peu à peu*, and he had already got a *tabouret* and a chair. He told me tales of being invited to a reception at the American Minister's, but, as he had no dress-suit to go in, he had to borrow Poynter's, who fitted

1855-59]

## JAMES McNEILL WHISTLER

him out, all except his boots. So he waited until the guests at the hotel had retired for the night, when he went round the corridors, found what he wanted, and left them at the door on his return from the reception. It was more his manner and the clever way he told the tale that amused us all. You see it is nearly fifty years since all this happened, and I find it rather difficult to recall scenes which occurred so long ago. I have his first twelve etchings, which he did in 1858. I never saw him after I left Paris in 1858! He was never a friend of mine, and it was only occasionally he came to see us at the *atelier* in Notre-Dame-des-Champs."

Whistler lived at one time with Sir Edward J. Poynter, who, however, scarcely seems to have understood him. Their methods of study and work were different, and, to Poynter, Whistler was something of the "Idle Apprentice." In his speech at the first Royal Academy Banquet (April 30, 1904) after Whistler's death, Poynter said:

"Thrown very intimately in Whistler's company in early days, I knew him well when he was a student in Paris—that is, if he could be called a student, who, to my knowledge, during the two or three years when I was associated with him, devoted hardly as many weeks to study. His genius, however, found its way in spite of an excess of the natural indolence of disposition and love of pleasure of which a certain share has been the hereditary attribute of the art student."

"Whistler was never wholly one of us," Mr. Armstrong told us once in talking of him. It seems that Whistler laughed at the Englishmen and their ways, above all at the boxing and sparring matches in their studios; he could not see why they didn't hire the *concierges* to do the fighting for them. The rush of American artists to Paris had not yet begun, and Whistler was more closely associated with the French than with any other students. He could speak their language, he knew Murger by heart before he came to Paris, and there he got to know him personally. Mr. Ionides says that once, walking along a street on the *rive gauche* with

## IN THE LATIN QUARTER

Whistler and Lamont, they met Murger, and Whistler introduced them. Paris, in the Latin Quarter, was still the Paris of Murger, where the young artist still led the easiest, merriest, dirtiest existence possible, where, with his long hair and beard and wonderful clothes, he still continued to *épater le bourgeois*; where he toiled away all day in the schools or galleries, and played away all night in the *cafés* and balls; where he was the friend of the *grisette*; where he met poverty with the gaiety of Marcel and failure with the swagger of Rodolphe, where the extravagant was for him the normal; where courage and hope saved him from disaster; and where, through all his absurdities and follies and *blague*, art was the beginning and end of his every thought and ambition. Whistler delighted in the fantastic humour and picturesqueness of it all, and was always quoting Murger, even late in life. The Englishmen at Gleyre's could not understand his pleasure in his "no shirt friends," as he called one group of students. Every now and then their society palled, even on him, and he would then tell the Englishmen that he "must give up the 'no shirt' set and begin to live cleanly." The end came when, during an absence from Paris, he lent them his room, luxurious from the student standpoint, with a bath, and full of beautiful china. The "no shirt friends" could not change their habits with their surroundings. They made grogs in the bath; they never washed a plate, but, when one side was dirty, ate off the other, and Whistler had not bargained to make his own rooms the background for such a scene in the *Vie de Bohème*. But this was later on, after his adventures with them had been the gossip of the *Quartier*, and had confirmed the Englishmen in their impressions of his idleness.

Among the many French students who were his companions, he had a few intimate friends: Aubert, the first man he knew in Paris, a clerk in the *Crédit Foncier*; Fantin; Legros;

1855-59]

## JAMES McNEILL WHISTLER

Becquet, a musician ; Henri Martin, son of the historian ; Drouet \* the sculptor ; Henri Oulevey and Ernest Delannoy, painters. Only two of these friends survive to-day. From Fantin we have the notes made just before his death. Legros prefers to remember nothing, the friendship in his case ending irrevocably many years since. MM. Drouet and Oulevey have told us almost as much as Whistler did of those days. When Oulevey first knew him, Whistler lived in a little hotel in the Rue St. Sulpice ; then he moved to No. 1 Rue Bourbon-le-Château, near St. Germain des Près ; and then to No. 3 Rue Campagne-Première, where Drouet had a studio. For a while, when remittances ran out, he climbed his six flights and shared a garret with Delannoy, the " Ernest " of the stories Whistler liked best to tell.

Whistler's lodgings and restaurants, a matter of course to his fellow students, startled the friends from home. Mr. Miles writes us an account of his experience in May 1857, when he came to Paris with letters from Whistler's family and a draft for his allowance.

" At the Beaux-Arts he was not to be found ; he had given it up, but I got his address. He had left it without leaving any record of his new one. I was in despair, but went to the Luxembourg, hoping to find him or some trace of him. In looking at a picture, I backed into an easel, heard a muttered ' damn ' behind me—and there was Whistler himself, painting busily. He took me to his quarters in a little back street, up ten flights of stairs—a tiny room with brick floor, a cot bed, a chair on which were a basin and pitcher—and that was *all* ! We sat on the cot, and talked as cheerfully as if in a palace—and he got the draft. ' Now,' said he, ' I shall move downstairs, and begin all over—furnish my room comfortably. You see, I have just eaten my washstand and borrowed a little, hoping the draft would arrive. Have been living for some time on my wardrobe. You are just in time, don't know what I should have done, but it often happens

\* M. Drouet died in May 1903, just as we were going over our proofs. Only the spring before, we had seen him in Paris when he had told us a great deal of Whistler and student life in the Fifties. Now, only Legros and Oulevey remain.

## IN THE LATIN QUARTER

this way ! I first eat a wardrobe, and then move upstairs a flight or two, but seldom get so high as this before the draft comes ! ' How true this is I can't say, but it sounds probable and very like Whistler—at that age—he was then about twenty-three or just twenty-four at most—May 1857. Then Whistler showed me Paris ; met some of his painter friends. I remember only Lambert (French) and Poynter (English)—now a great swell. Whistler didn't care much for Poynter at that time, but was witty and amusing, as usual. He dined with me at the best restaurant in Paris, which he had not done for a long time, and dined me, the next day, at a little *crémérie* \* to show what his usual fare had been, and, indeed, usually was when the time was approaching for the arrival of his allowance—the back ones being exhausted ! ”

The restaurant where they all usually met was Lalouette's, near the Rue Dauphine, famous to them for a wonderful Burgundy at one franc the bottle, *le cachet vert*, called for only on great occasions, and more famous now for Bibi Lalouette of the etching, the child of the *patron*. Lalouette, like Siron at Barbizon, understood the artist and gave unlimited credit. Whistler, when he left Paris, owed Lalouette three thousand francs, every *sou* of which was paid, though it took a long time. They also dined at Madame Bachimont's in the Place de la Sorbonne, a *crémérie*, where Whistler

\* This *crémérie* may have been Madame Bachimont's or else “ the clean little place ” described by Major W. L. B. Jenney. The *patronne* made wonderful pumpkin pies, and Whistler, who never lost his appetite for American dishes, came to eat them. “ Young Whistler, then an art student, bright, original and amusing,” Major Jenney thinks, gave “ no promise of any particular ability as an artist,” but had made a reputation as the leader of disorder at the Louvre, and the organiser of nigger minstrels. “ Among the *habitués* at Madame Busque's was a student from the School of Mines, Vinton, afterwards Professor of Mining at Columbia College, and during the war a brigadier-general. He told me the following story in 1866. One night in South Carolina an officer wandered into his camp. He sent word to the general, by the sergeant of the guard, that he was an officer who had lost his way, that he asked permission to pass the rest of the night in his camp, adding that he had known General Vinton when a student in Paris. General Vinton sent for the officer, whom he failed to recognise. After some thought, he asked the question, ‘ Who was the funniest man we knew in Paris ? ’ ‘ Whistler ! ’ instantly answered the officer. ‘ All right,’ says Vinton, ‘ take that empty cot, you are no spy.’ ”

## JAMES McNEILL WHISTLER

once gave a dinner to the American Consul, and invited “*Canichon*,” the daughter of the house, and bought her a new hat for the occasion—a tremendous sensation through all the *Quartier*.

M. Drouet does not think that Whistler worked much, certainly not in usual student fashion at the schools. “He was every evening at the students’ balls, and as he never got up until eleven or twelve in the morning, where was the time for work?” M. Oulevey cannot remember his doing much at Gleyre’s or the Luxembourg, or the Louvre, but he was always drawing, in the manner of Gavarni, the people and the scenes of the *Quartier* his subjects, often *des sujets presque enfantins*. In the memory of both, his work is overshadowed by his gaiety and by his wit, his *blague*, his charm: “*tout à fait un homme à part*,” is M. Oulevey’s phrase, with “*un cœur de femme et une volonté d’homme*.” Anything might be expected of him, and M. Drouet adds that he was quick to resent an insult, always *un petit rageur*. George Boughton, of a younger generation, when he came to the *Quartier*, found that all stories of larks were put down to Whistler. Mr. Luke Ionides writes:

“He was a great favourite among us all, and also among the *grisettes* we used to meet at the gardens where dancing went on. I remember one especially—they called her the *tigresse*. She seemed madly in love with Jimmie and would not allow any other woman to talk to him when she was present. She sat to him several times with her curly hair down her back. She had a good voice, and I often thought she had suggested Trilby to Du Maurier.”

She was the model for *Fumette*, Eloise, a little *modiste*, who knew Musset by heart and would recite his verses to Whistler, and who one day in a rage tore up, not his etchings as Mr. Wedmore says, but the Gavarni-like drawings. Whistler was living then in the Rue St. Sulpice, and when he came home, to find the pieces piled high on his table

## IN THE LATIN QUARTER

he wept over the ruin, literally wept, according to Oulevey.

A figure as familiar in the memory of his friends is *La Mère Gérard*. He loved to talk about her himself. She was very old and almost blind, was said to write verse, had come down in the world, and sold violets and matches at the gate of the Luxembourg Gardens. She was very picturesque, as she sat huddled up on the steps, and he got her to pose for him many times. She insisted that she had a tapeworm, and if in the studio he asked her what she would eat or drink, her invariable answer was "*Du lait : il aime ça !*" a story that recalls one told by Flaubert. They used to chaff him about her in the *Quartier*. Once, Lalouette invited all his clients to spend a day with him in the country, and Whistler accepted on condition that he could bring *La Mère Gérard*. She arrived, got up in great style, sat at his side in the carriage when they all drove off together, and grew livelier as the day went on. He painted her in the course of the afternoon, the portrait was a success, and he promised it to her, but first took it back to the studio to finish. Then he fell ill and was sent to England. When he returned and saw the portrait again, he thought it much too good for *La Mère Gérard*. He made a copy for the old lady, who saw the difference and was furious. Not long after he was walking past the Luxembourg, arm in arm with Lamont. The old woman, huddled on the steps as usual, did not look up :

"*Eh bien, Madame Gérard, comment ça va ?*" Lamont asked.

"*Assez bien, Monsieur, assez bien.*"

"*Et votre Américain ?*" To which she replied, not looking up, "*Lui ? On dit qu'il a craqué ! Encore une espèce de canaille de moins !*"

And Whistler laughed, and then she knew him, as so many were to know him by that laugh all his life.

## JAMES McNEILL WHISTLER

For ages after, in the *Quartier*, he was called "*Espèce de canaille*." And this is where Du Maurier got the story which he tells in *Trilby*.

Another character in the *Quartier*, of whom Whistler never tired of telling us, was the Count de Montezuma, the delightful, inimitable, impossible Montezuma, not a student, not a painter, not anything so far as we could discover, but an adventurer after Whistler's own heart. He never had a *sou*, but he always had cheek enough to see him through. Whistler told us of him :

"This is the sort of thing he would do, and with an air—amazing ! He started one day for Charenton on the steamboat, his pockets, as usual, empty, and he was there for as long as he could stay. The boat broke down, a *sergent de ville* came on board and ordered everybody off except the captain and his family, who happened to be with him. The Montezuma paid no attention. With arms crossed, he walked up and down, looking at no one. They waited, but he walked on, up and down, up and down, looking at no one. The *sergent de ville* repeated : '*Tout le monde à terre !*' The Montezuma gave no sign. '*Et vous ?*' the *sergent de ville* asked at last. '*Je suis de la famille !*' said the Montezuma. Opposite, staring at him, stood the captain with his wife and children. 'You see,' said the *sergent de ville*, 'the captain does not know you, he says you are not of the family. You must go.' '*Moi,*' and the Montezuma drew himself up proudly—'*Moi ! je suis le bâtard !*' "

Though frequently hard up, Whistler had an income which seemed princely to students who lived on nothing at all. If Whistler had money in his pockets, Mr. Ionides says, he spent it royally on others. If his pockets were empty, he managed to refill them in a way that still amazes M. Oulevey who, in proof of it, told us of the night when, after the *café* where they had squandered their last *sous* on kirsch had closed, he and Lambert and Whistler adjourned to the Halles for supper, ordered the best and ate it. Then he and Lambert stayed in the restaurant as hostages, while



LA MÈRE GÉRARD



## IN THE LATIN QUARTER

Whistler, at dawn, went off to find the money to pay. He was back when they awoke, with three or four hundred francs in his pocket. He had been to see an American friend, he said, a painter: "And do you know, he had the bad manners to abuse the situation—he insisted on my looking at his pictures!"

There were times, however, when everybody failed, even Mr. Lucas, George Whistler's friend, who was living in Paris and often came to his rescue. One summer day he pawned his coat when he was penniless and wanted an iced drink in a *buvette* just across the way from his rooms in Rue Bourbon-le-Château. "What would you?" he said. "It is warm!" And for the next two or three days he went in shirt sleeves. From Mr. Ionides we have heard how Whistler and Ernest Delannoy carried their straw mattresses to the nearest *Mont de Piété*—stumbling up three flights of stairs under them to be refused any advance at all by the man at the window. "*C'est bien*," said Ernest, with his grandest air—" *C'est bien. J'enverrai un commissionnaire!*" And they dropped the mattresses and walked out with dignity, to go bedless home. Then there was a bootmaker to whom Whistler owed money, and who appeared with his bill, refusing to move unless he was paid. Whistler was courtesy itself, and regretting his momentary embarrassment, begged the bootmaker to accept an engraving of Garibaldi which he ventured to admire. The bootmaker was so charmed that he spoke no more of his bill, but took another order on the spot, and made new shoes into the bargain.

Many of the things now told of Whistler, he used to tell us of Ernest or some of the others: with such joy that not to repeat his stories would be to give but a poor picture of him as student. Ernest, he always said it was—though others say it was Whistler—who, having a commission to copy a picture in the Louvre, and not having any canvas or paints

1855-59]

## JAMES McNEILL WHISTLER

or brushes, or a *sou* to buy them with, went boldly to the gallery one morning. The first to arrive, he carried himself with a businesslike air that would have disarmed any *gardien* and picked out what he needed : an easel, a nice clean canvas, a palette, a brush or two, and a stick of charcoal, wrote his name in large letters on the back of the canvas, sketched in his copy with the charcoal, and when artists and students began to drop in, was too busy to see anything but his work. Presently there was an outcry. What ?—an easel missing, a canvas gone, brushes not to be found. The *gardien* bustled round. Everybody talked at once. Ernest looked up in a fury—shameful ! why should he be disturbed in this fashion ? What was it all about anyhow ? When he heard what had happened no one was louder in denunciation. It had come to a pretty pass in the Louvre when you couldn't leave your belongings over night without having them stolen ! Things at last quieted down, Ernest's picture was sketched in, but his palette was bare. He stretched, jumped down from his high stool, strolled about, stopped to criticise here, to praise there, until he saw the colours he needed. The copy of the man who owned them ravished him. Astonishing ! He stepped back to see it better. He advanced to look at the original, he grew excited, he gesticulated. The man, who had never been noticed before, grew excited too. Ernest talked the faster, gesticulated the more wildly, until down came his thumb on just the white or the blue or the red he wanted, and with another sweep of his arm, a big lump of it was on his palette. Further on another supply offered itself. In the end, his palette well set, he was back at his easel, painting his copy. In some way he had supplied himself most plentifully with "turps" so that several times the picture was in danger of running off the canvas. At last it was finished and displayed to his patron, who utterly refused to have it. Whistler, however, succeeded in selling

## IN THE LATIN QUARTER

it for Ernest to a dealer; and, "Do you know," he said, "I saw the picture years afterwards, and I think it was rather better than the original!"

Oulevey's version is that it was Whistler who helped himself to a box of colours, and, when discovered by its owner, was all innocence and surprise and apology: why, he supposed of course, the boxes of colour were there for the benefit of students.

On another occasion when Ernest, according to Whistler, had finished a large copy of Veronese's *Marriage Feast at Cana*, he and a friend, carrying it jauntily between them, started out to find a buyer. They crossed the Seine and offered it for five hundred francs to the big dealers on the right bank. Then they offered it for two hundred and fifty on the left. Then they went back and offered it for one hundred and twenty-five. Then they came across to the left and offered it for seventy-five. And back again for twenty-five and across once more for ten. And they were crossing still again, to try to get rid of it for five when, on the Pont des Arts, they lifted the huge canvas: "*Un*," they said with a great swing, "*deux, trois—v'lan!*" and over it went into the water with a splash. There was a cry from the crowd, a rush to their side of the bridge, *sergents de ville* came running, omnibuses and cabs stopped on both banks, boats pushed out on the river—altogether it was an immense success, and they went home enchanted.

Ernest was Whistler's companion in the most wonderful adventure of all, the journey to Alsace, when several of the *French Set* of etchings were made. Mr. Luke Ionides thinks it was in 1856. Fantin, who did not meet Whistler until 1858, remembered him, just back from a journey to the Rhine, coming to the *Café Molière*, and showing the etchings he had made on the way. The *French Set* was published in November of that year, and as Whistler returned late in the

1855-59]

## JAMES McNEILL WHISTLER

autumn, the series could scarcely have appeared so soon. However, more important than the date is the fact that on his journey the *Liverdun*, the *Street at Saverne* and *The Kitchen* were etched. He had made a little money somehow, two hundred and fifty francs, or it was a present from an uncle, Sir Rennell Rodd suggests, and he and Ernest started out for Nancy and Strasburg. At Cologne they woke up one morning to find the money all gone. "What is to be done?" asked Ernest. "Order breakfast," said Whistler, which they did. There was no American Consul in the town, and after breakfast he wrote to everybody who could help him: to a fellow student, a Chilian he had asked to forward letters from Paris, to Seymour Haden in London, to Amsterdam where he thought letters might have been sent by mistake. Then they settled down to wait. Every day they would go to the post office for letters, every day the officials would say "*Nichts! Nichts!*" until they got to be known in the town—Whistler, with his long hair, Ernest with his brown holland suit and straw hat now fearfully out of season. The boys of the town would be in wait and follow them to the post office where, hardly were they at the door, before the official was shaking his head and saying "*Nichts! Nichts!*" and all the crowd would yell "*Nichts! Nichts!*" At last, to escape the constant attention, they would spend the day sitting on the ramparts. It began to look desperate. Whistler was reduced to washing his own shirt, and, with a little iron he had bought on the way, to iron it at night in his room.

At the end of ten days, Whistler took his knapsack, put his plates in it and carried it to the landlord, Herr Schmitz, whose daughter, "Little Gretchen," he had etched—probably the plate called *Gretchen at Heidelberg*. He said frankly that he was penniless, but here were his copper plates in a knapsack upon which he would set his seal. What was to be done with copper plates? the landlord asked. They

## IN THE LATIN QUARTER

were to be kept with every care as the work of a distinguished artist, Whistler answered, and when he was back in Paris, he would send the money to pay his bill and then the landlord would send him the knapsack. Herr Schmitz hesitated, while Whistler and Ernest were in despair over the necessity of trusting such masterpieces to him. The bargain was struck after much talk. The landlord gave them a last breakfast. Lina, the maid, slipped her last groschen into Whistler's hand, and the two set out to walk from Cologne, with paper and pencils for their baggage.

Whistler used to say that, had they been less young, they could have seen only the discomfort of that long tramp. A portrait was the price of every plate of soup, every egg, every glass of milk they could get on the road. The children who hooted them had sometimes to be drawn before a glass of water, or a bit of bread, was given to them. They slept in straw. And they walked until Whistler's light little Parisian shoes got rid of a portion of their soles and most of their upper leather, and Ernest's hollands grew shabbier and shabbier. But they were young enough to laugh and, one day, Whistler, seeing Ernest tramping ahead solemnly through the mud, the rain dripping from his straw hat, his linen coat a rag, shrieked with laughter as he limped. "What would you?" Ernest said mournfully, "*les saisons m'ont toujours devancé!*" Fortunately, it was the time of the autumn fairs, and, joining a lady who played the violin and a gentleman who played the harp, they gave entertainments in every village they passed, beating a big drum to attract the crowd, announcing themselves as distinguished artists from Paris, offering to draw portraits, three francs the half-length, five francs the full-length. At times they beat the big drum in vain and Whistler was reduced to charging five *sous* apiece for his portraits, but he did his best, he said, and there was not a drawing to be ashamed of.

## JAMES McNEILL WHISTLER

At last, they came to a town where there was an American Consul, who knew Major Whistler, and advanced fifty francs to his son. At Liège, poor, shivering, ragged Ernest got twenty from the French Consul, and the rest of the journey was made in comfort. On his return, Whistler's first appearance at the *Café Molière* was a triumph. They had thought him dead, and here he was, *le petit Américain* ! And what *blague*, what calling for coffee *pour le petit Whistler, pour notre petit Américain* ! And what songs !

“ *Car il n'est pas mort, larifla ! fla ! fla !*

*Non, c'est qu'il dort.*

*Pour le réveiller, trinquons nos verres !*

*Pour le réveiller, trinquons encore ! ”*

That Herr Schmitz was paid and delivered up the plates, the prints are the proofs. Some years after, Whistler went back to Cologne, where he was travelling with his mother. In the evening, he slipped away to the old, little hotel, where the landlord and the landlord's daughter, grown up, recognised him and rejoiced.

These stories, and hundreds like them, still float about the *Quartier*, told, as we have heard them, not only by Whistler, but by *les vieux*, who shake their heads over the present degeneracy of students and the tameness of student life—stories of the clay model of the heroic statue of Géricault, left, for want of money, swathed in rags, and sprinkled every morning until at last even the rags had to be sold, and then, when they were taken off, Géricault had sprouted with mushrooms that paid for a feast in the *Quartier* and enough clay to finish the statue ; stories of a painter, in his empty studio, hiring a piano by the month, that the landlord might see it carried upstairs and get a new idea of his tenant's assets ; stories of the monkey tied to a string, let loose in other people's larders, then pulled back, clasping loaves of bread and bottles of wine to its bosom ; stories of students,

## IN THE LATIN QUARTER

with bedclothes all pawned, sleeping in chests of drawers to keep warm ; stories of Courbet's *Baigneuse* in wonderful Highland costume at the student's balls ; stories of practical jokes at the Louvre. It was the day of practical jokes, *les charges* ; and Courbet, whom they worshipped, was the biggest *blagueur* of them all, eventually signing his death warrant with that last terrible *charge*, the fall of the Column of Vendôme,\* which Paris never forgave.

In this atmosphere, Whistler's excitable spirit, so alarming to his mother, found a new stimulus, and it is not to be wondered at, if his gaiety struck every one in Paris as in St. Petersburg and Pomfret, West Point and Washington.†

\* During the Commune, when Courbet was Directeur des Beaux-Arts, the order was given for the destruction of the Column. It was well known that, in his republican fury, he had urged its removal, representing that Paris should be purged of all traces of the Empire. He was afterwards held responsible for the vandalism, and some went so far as to say that he had taken actual part in pulling down the Column. At all events he was condemned to six months' imprisonment, and to paying the cost of putting it up again, and there is no doubt that all this trouble hastened his death in 1877.

† Mr. Leon Dabo tells us that his father was, at the time of Whistler's journey to Alsace, a student at Gleyne's, that his home was at Saverne, and that Whistler and Ernest went there to see him, Whistler making his etchings of Saverne and Liverdun at this time. Mr. Dabo possesses a number of documents which prove this.

## CHAPTER VII. WORKING DAYS IN THE LATIN QUARTER. THE YEARS EIGHTEEN FIFTY-FIVE TO EIGHTEEN FIFTY-NINE CONTINUED

THE stories cannot be left out of Whistler's life as a student, so living a part of it were they in his memory. His fellow students brought back to England the impression that he was an idler ; and it is hard to-day to make people believe that he was anything else in his youth. And yet he worked in Paris as prodigiously as he played. The convictions, the preferences, the prejudices he kept to the end were formed during those early years. His lifelong admiration for Poe, who as a West Point man would in any case have commanded his regard, was no doubt strengthened by the hold Poe had taken on the imagination of French men of letters. His disdain of Nature, his contempt for anecdote in art as a concession to an ignorant public, his translation of painting into musical terms—this, and much else so often charged against him as deliberate eccentricity or pose, can be traced by the curious to Baudelaire. To us, it was incomprehensible how he found time to read as a student, and yet he knew the literature of that period thoroughly. With its artists, and their tendencies and revolts, he was more familiar. He identified himself with their leading movements ; he mastered all that Gleyre could teach on the one hand and Courbet on the other ; through his friends he came under the influence of Lecocq de Boisbaudran, who, more than any other teacher then, was occupied with the

## IN THE LATIN QUARTER

study of values and the effects of night. In a word, it seems impossible for any one to imagine that Whistler idled away his four full years in Paris.

The younger men of the moment, in their rebellion against the academic, the official, in art, were not so foolish as to disdain Old Masters. They went to the Louvre to learn how to use their eyes and their hands, and to be independent enough to depend upon themselves. They copied the old pictures there, and there they met and got to know each other. To Whistler the Frenchmen were more sympathetic than the English in his serious, as in his lighter hours, and he joined them at the Louvre. Respect for the great traditions of art always remained his standard: "What is not worthy of the Louvre is not art," he said again and again. Rembrandt and Velasquez were the masters by whom he was most influenced. There are only a few pictures by Velasquez in the Louvre, and Whistler's early appreciation of him has been a puzzle to some critics, who, to account for it, have credited him with a journey, when a student, to Madrid. But that journey was not made in the 'fifties, nor at any other period, though he planned it more than once. A great deal could be learned about Velasquez without going to Spain. Whistler knew the London galleries, and in 1857 he visited the Art Treasures Exhibition at Manchester, taking a friend with him. Miss Emily Chapman has looked up her diaries for us, and writes that on September 11, 1857, Rose, her sister, "went to Darwen and found Whistler and Henri Martin staying at Earnsdale" with another sister, Mrs. Potter—"a merry evening," the note finishes. There were fourteen fine examples of Velasquez in the Exhibition, lent from private collections in England, among them the *Venus*, *Admiral Pulido Pareja*, *Duke Olivarez on Horseback*, *Don Balthazar in the Tennis Court*, several of which are now in the National Gallery, London.

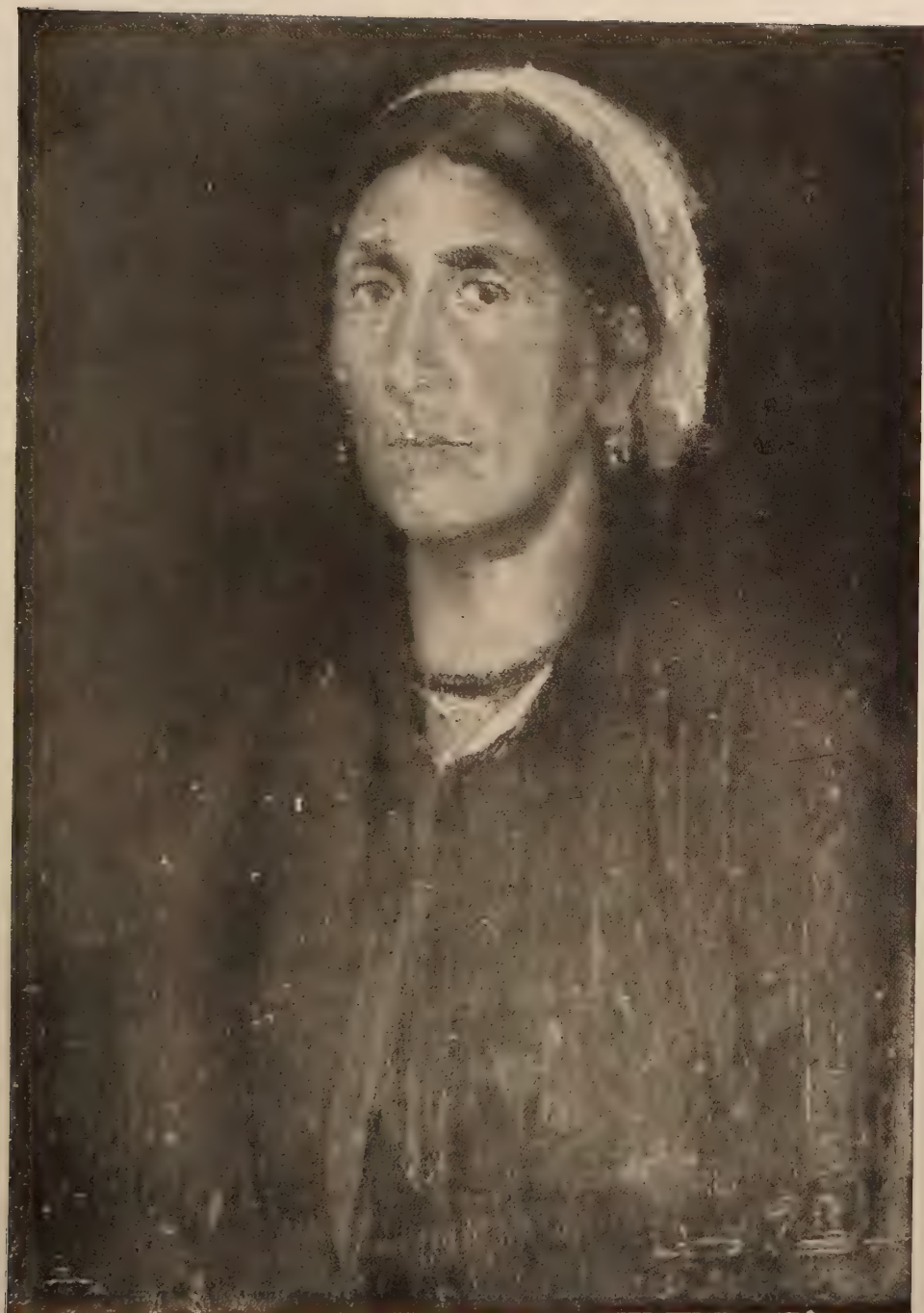
## JAMES McNEILL WHISTLER

Whistler once described himself to us as

“a surprising youth, suddenly appearing in the midst of the French students from no one knew where, with my *Mère Gérard* and the *Piano Picture* [*At the Piano*] for introduction, and making friends with Fantin and Legros, who had already arrived, and Courbet, whom they were all raving about, and who was very kind to me.”

The *Piano Picture* was painted toward the end of his student years, the *Mère Gérard* a little earlier, so that this description agrees with Fantin's notes. In 1858, Fantin says, he was copying the *Marriage Feast at Cana* in the Louvre when he saw passing one day a strange creature—“*Personnage étrange, le Whistler en chapeau bizarre,*” who, amiable and charming, stopped to talk, and this was the beginning of their friendship, strengthened that evening when they met again at the *Café Molière*. Carolus Duran writes us, from the Académie de France in Rome, that he and Whistler met when they were students in Paris; after that he lost sight of Whistler until the days of the new Salon, but, though there were a few meetings then, his memories are altogether of the student years. Bracquemond has recalled for us that he was making the preliminary drawing for his etching after Holbein's *Erasmus* in the Louvre, when he first saw Whistler. Their meetings were cordial, but never led to intimacy. With Legros, Whistler's friendship did become intimate, and the two, with Fantin, formed what Whistler called their little Society of Three.

Fantin was somewhat older, had been studying much longer, and already had, among students, a reputation for wide and sound knowledge: “as a learned painter,” in Mr. Armstrong's words. M. Bénédite thinks that the friendship between the two men had its interest for Fantin, to whom Whistler was useful at the start, but that it was of the greatest importance to Whistler, on whose art, in its develop-



TÊTE DE PAYSANNE



## IN THE LATIN QUARTER

ment, it had a marked influence. Mr. Luke Ionides, on the other hand, insists that "even in those early days, Whistler's influence was very much felt. He had very decided views, which were always listened to with much respect and regard by many older artists who seemed to recognise his genius." The truth probably is that Whistler and Fantin influenced each other, as fellow students will. They worked in sympathy, and the understanding between them was complete. They not only studied together at the Louvre, but both joined the group who went to Bonvin's studio to work from the model under the direction of Courbet.

With Courbet, we come to an influence which cannot be doubted, much as Whistler regretted it as time went on. M. Oulevey remembers Whistler going to call on Courbet once, and saying enthusiastically as he left the house: "*C'est un grand homme!*" and certainly, for several years, his pictures showed how strong this influence was. M. Duret thinks this influence is revealed in another way, and sees in Courbet's "Manifestoes" forerunners of the letters Whistler wrote at a later date to the papers. Courbet, whatever mad pranks he might play with the *bourgeois*, was seriousness itself when there was any question of art, and the men who studied under him learned to be serious, Whistler no less than the rest of them.

The best proof of Whistler's industry is his work; his pictures and prints, which are truly amazing in quality and quantity for the student who, Sir Edward Poynter would have us believe, worked in two or three years only as many weeks. It would be nearer the truth to say that he never stopped working. Everything he enjoyed as student he turned to his profit as artist. The women he danced with at night were his models by day: *Fumette*, who, as she crouches, her hair loose on her shoulders, in that early etching, looks the *tigresse*, capable of tearing up

## JAMES McNEILL WHISTLER

anything in a passion ; and *Finette*, the dancer in a famous quadrille, who, when she came to London, was announced as "Madame Finette in the *cancan*, the national dance of France." All his friends had to pose for him : Drouet, in that fine plate, done, he says, in two sittings, one of two and a half hours, the other of an hour and a half ; Axenfeld, the brother of the famous physician ; Becquet, the sculptor-musician, dead a few months now, the greatest man who ever lived to his friends, to the world unknown ; Astruc, painter, sculptor, poet, editor of *L'Artiste*, of whom his wife said that he was the first man since the Renaissance who combined all the arts, but who is only remembered in Whistler's print ; Delâtre, the printer ; Riault, the engraver. Bibi Valentin was the son of another engraver. And there is the amusing pencil sketch of Fantin, in bed on a bitter winter day, working away in his overcoat, muffler and top hat, trying to keep warm. The streets where Whistler wandered, the restaurants where he dined became his studio for the time. At the house near the Rue Dauphine he etched *Bibi Lalouette* ; his *Soupe à Trois Sous* \* was done in a *cabaret* kept by Martin, whose portrait is in the print and who was famous in the *Quartier* for having won the Cross of the Legion of Honour by his bravery at an earlier age than any man ever decorated, and then promptly losing it by some shameful deed. And so we might go through Whistler's etchings of this period. There is hardly one that is not a record of his daily life and of the people among whom he lived, though to make it such a record was the last thing he was thinking of. But he took his work with him everywhere, and not one of the young men of his generation who set out to find their subjects in the world they knew and the things about them, succeeded so consistently and so brilliantly.

\* Mr. Ralph Thomas says, "While Whistler was etching this, at twelve o'clock at night, a *gendarme* came up to him and wanted to know what he was doing. Whistler gave him the plate upside down, but officialism could make nothing of it."

## IN THE LATIN QUARTER

Whistler's first set of etchings was published in November 1858, when he had been in Paris only a little more than three years. The prints were not the first he made after leaving Washington; a portrait of himself, another of his niece, *Annie Haden*, the *Dutchman holding the Glass* are as early, if not earlier; but they were the first published as a set—the *French Set*—a form of publication he repeated several times. There were twelve prints, some done in Paris, some during the journey to the Rhine, some in London.

*Liverdun*

*Little Arthur*

*La Rétameuse*

*La Vieille aux Loques*

*En Plein Soleil*

*Annie*

*The Unsafe Tenement*

*La Marchande de Moularde*

*La Mère Gérard*

*Fumette*

*Street at Saverne*

*The Kitchen*

There was also an etched title, with his portrait, for which Ernest, putting on the big hat, sat. Whistler dedicated the set to *mon vieil ami Seymour Haden*, and issued and sold it himself for two guineas. Delâtre printed the plates for him, and, standing at his side, M. Drouet says, Whistler learned the art. Delâtre's shop was at 171 Rue St. Jacques, the room described by the De Goncourts, with the two windows looking out on a bare garden, the wheel, the man in grey blouse standing by it, the old noisy clock in the corner, and the sleeping dog, and the children peeping in at the door; the room where they waited for their first proof with the emotion they thought no other occupation or amusement could give. Drouet says that Whistler himself never printed at this time. But Oulevey remembers a little press in the Rue Campagne-Première, and Whistler pulling the proofs for the occasional friend who came to buy them. He was then already hunting for beautiful old paper, loitering at the boxes along the *quais*, tearing out the fly-leaves from the fine old books he found there. Passages in many plates of the 1855-59]

## JAMES McNEILL WHISTLER

series, especially in *La Mère Gérard* and *La Marchande de Moutarde*, are precisely like his work in *The Coast Survey*, No. 1. For the only time, and as a result of his training at Washington, his handling threatened to become mannered. But in some of the prints, the *Street at Saverne* for instance, he had already overcome his mannerism, while in others not in the series but done during these years, like the *Drouet*, *Soupe à Trois Sous*, *Bibi Lalouette*, he had perfected his early style of drawing, biting and dry-point. We never asked him how the French plates were bitten, but, no doubt, it was in the traditional way by biting all over and stopping out. They were drawn directly from Nature, as can be seen in his portraits of places which are reversed in the prints. So far as we know, he scarcely ever made a preliminary sketch. We can recall none of his etchings at any period that might have been done from memory, except the *Street at Saverne*, the Venetian *Nocturnes*, and the *Dance House*, Amsterdam. He sometimes suggested points on the plate with Chinese white or water-colour, but this was all.

His first paintings in Paris undertaken as definite commissions were, he told us, copies he made in the Louvre. They were done for Captain Williams, a Stonington man, more familiarly known as "Stonington Bill," whose portrait Whistler said he had painted before leaving home. "Stonington Bill" must have liked it, for, when he came to Paris shortly afterwards, he gave Whistler the commission to paint as many copies at the Louvre as he chose, for twenty-five dollars apiece. Whistler said he copied a snow scene with a horse and a soldier standing by and another at its feet, and never afterwards could remember who was the painter; the busy picture detective may run it to ground for the edification of posterity. There was also a St. Luke with a halo and draperies; and a woman holding up a child towards a barred window beyond which, seen dimly, was the



DIANA AT THE POOL  
(Copy of a painting by Boucher)



## IN THE LATIN QUARTER

face of a man ; and an inundation, no doubt *The Deluge* or *The Wreck*. He was sure he must have made something interesting out of them, he knew there were wonderful things even then—the beginnings of harmonies and of purple schemes—he supposed it must have been intuitive. Another Stonington man commissioned him to paint Ingres' *Andromeda* chained to the rock—probably this was the *Angelina* \* of Ingres which he and Tissot are said to have copied side by side ; and for all he knew, all these were still at Stonington and shown there as marvellous things by Whistler. To the list we had from him may be added the *Diana* by Boucher in the London Memorial Exhibition, owned by Mr. Louis Winans, and the group of cavaliers after Velasquez, the one copy Fantin remembered his doing. A study of a nun was sent to the London Exhibition, but not shown, with the name " Wisler " on the back of the canvas, not by any means a bad study of drapery, which may have been, despite the name, another of his copies, or done in a sketch class.

The first original picture painted in Paris was, he always assured us, the *Mère Gérard*, in white cap, holding a flower, that is now the property of Mr. Swinburne. There is another portrait of her in the possession, we believe, of Messrs. Colnaghi, and from M. Drouet we have heard of a third which, for the moment anyhow, has vanished. Whistler painted a number of other portraits, some it would probably be impossible to trace, and a few are well known. One, a difficult piece of work, he said, was of his father, after a lithograph sent him for the purpose by his brother George. A second was of himself in his big hat, the portrait owned by Mr. Avery and catalogued as *Whistler with Hat* in the Paris Memorial Exhibition. Two were studies of models : the *Tête de Paysanne*, a woman in a white cap, younger than *Mère*

\* We hear, however, that a copy of an *Andromeda* by him was shown at Mr. Keppel's gallery in New York.

## JAMES McNEILL WHISTLER

*Gérard*, but her face much sterner, that belongs to the Comtesse de Béarn ; and the *Head of an Old Man Smoking*, an old pedlar of crockery whom Whistler came across one day by chance in the Halles, brought to his studio and painted, a full face with large brown hat, for long the property of M. Drouet. But the best known and, in many ways, the finest painting of this period, is *The Piano Picture*, as Whistler called it. It contains the portrait of his sister *At the Piano*, and of his niece, the “ wonderful little Annie ” of the etchings, now Mrs. Charles Thynne, who gave him many sittings for it, and to whom, in return, he gave the pencil sketches made on the Rhine journey, which she lent to the London Memorial Exhibition. The portraits “ smell of the Louvre.” The method is acquired from close knowledge of the Old Masters. “ Rembrandtish ” is the usual criticism passed on these early canvases, with their paint laid thickly on and their heavy shadows. Indeed, it is evident that the portrait of himself must have been done after long and careful study of Rembrandt’s *Young Man* in the Louvre. To his choice and treatment of subjects, in his pictures as in his etchings, he brought the uncompromising realism of Courbet, painting only the people he knew, as he saw them, and not in clothes borrowed from the classical and mediæval wardrobes of the fashionable studio. Yet at this stage, there is already the personal touch : Whistler does not efface himself entirely in his youthful devotion to his chosen masters. You feel it in the way a simple head or a figure is placed on the canvas, but especially where there is an opportunity for more elaborate composition. The arrangement of the lines of the pictures on the wall and the mouldings of the dado in *At the Piano*, the harmonious balance of the spaces of black and white in the dresses of the mother and her little girl, show the sense of design, of pattern, which he brought to perfection in the *Mother*, *Carlyle* and *Miss Alexander*. There was nothing

## IN THE LATIN QUARTER

like it in the painting of the other young men, of Degas, Fantin, Legros, Ribot, Manet ; nothing like it, for that matter, in the work of the older man, their leader, who painted *L'Enterrement à Ornans* and *Bonjour, Monsieur Courbet*. M. Duret says that Whistler's fellow students, who had immediately recognised his talent as etcher, now admitted as generously his accomplishment as painter, which agrees with Whistler's statement to us.

*At the Piano* was ready to be sent to the Salon of 1859. He submitted it, together with two etchings.\* The etchings were accepted, the picture was rejected. It may have been because of what was personal in it ; a hint of strong personality in the young usually fares that way at official hands. Fantin's story is :

"One day, Whistler brought back from London the *Piano Picture*, representing his sister and niece. He was refused with Legros, Ribot and myself at the Salon. Bonvin, whom I knew, interested himself in our rejected pictures, and exhibited them in his studio, and invited his friends, of whom Courbet was one, to see them. I recall very well that Courbet was struck with Whistler's picture."

Side by side with it hung *Les Deux Sœurs*, one of the finest pictures ever painted by Fantin, who also was exhibiting in public for the first time ; some studies of still life by Ribot ; and Legros' portrait of his father. The whole affair made a scandal. The injustice of the rejection was flagrant, the exhibitors at Bonvin's became famous, and Whistler's picture impressed many artists besides Courbet. With its exhibition Whistler's real student years ended. In one sense, he was a student all his life—it was only in his last years that he felt he was "beginning to understand," he often said. But with the exhibition at Bonvin's he ceased to be simply the student studying in the schools ; he was the artist working in his own studio.

\* We have been unable to find out their titles.

## CHAPTER VIII. THE BEGINNINGS IN LONDON. THE YEARS EIGHTEEN FIFTY-NINE TO EIGHTEEN SIXTY-THREE

AT this period, Whistler was continually coming and going between Paris and London, where he stayed with his sister, Lady Haden, at 62 Sloane Street, sometimes bringing friends with him, Henri Martin, Legros or Fantin. In 1859 he first invited Fantin, promising him glory and fortune, in a letter which M. Bénédicté thinks lyrical in its enthusiasm, and which was the beginning of an intimate correspondence between the two friends. Whistler's letters, now at the Luxembourg, published in part by M. Bénédicté in the *Gazette des Beaux Arts*, are not only delightful but largely autobiographical. "Whistler talked about me at this moment to his brother-in-law, Seymour Haden, who urged me to come to London; he had also talked about me to Boxall," Fantin says in his notes. "I should like it known that it was Whistler who introduced me to England."

Fantin arrived in time for them to go together to the Academy, which still gave its exhibitions in the east end of the National Gallery. Whistler was exhibiting there for the first time. He had no pictures, but *Two Etchings from Nature*, a perplexing title for all his etchings were "from Nature," were accepted and hung in the little octagon room, or "dark cell," as the critics called it, reserved for black-and-white. "*Les souvenirs les plus vifs que j'ai conservés de ce temps à Londres*," Fantin wrote, "*étaient notre*

AT THE PIANO (THE PIANO PICTURE)







## THE BEGINNINGS IN LONDON

*admiration pour l'exposition des tableaux de Millais à l'Academy."*

Millais was showing *The Vale of Rest*, abused, except "by the Rossettis and their clique," to a degree he thought "never equalled in the annals of criticism." He had not then quite abandoned Pre-Raphaelitism, and the two young men, fresh from Paris studios, recognised in his work the realism which, though conceived and expressed so differently, was the aim of the Pre-Raphaelites as of Courbet.

Seymour Haden, who had already etched some of his finest plates, was kind and helpful to his young visitors. He bought copies from Fantin, among them one of the many Fantin made of Veronese's *Marriage Feast at Cana*. He also purchased the pictures of Legros, who was "at one moment in so deplorable a condition," Whistler said to us, "that it needed God or a lesser person, to pull him out of it. And so I brought him over to London, and for a while he worked in my studio." He had, before coming, sold a church interior to Haden, who liked it, though he found the floor out of perspective. One day he took it to the room upstairs where he did his own etchings, and turned the key. When it reappeared the floor was in perspective according to Haden. A new gorgeous frame was bought, and the picture was hung conspicuously in the drawing-room. Whistler thought Haden seemed restive when he heard that Legros was coming, but nothing was said. The first day Legros was impressed: he had been accustomed to seeing himself in cheap frames, if in any frame at all. But, gradually, he looked beyond the frame, and Haden's work dawned upon him—that he could not stand. What was he to do? he asked Whistler. Run off with it, Whistler suggested. They got it down, called a four-wheeler and carried it away to the studio—"our own little *kopje*," for Whistler told us the story in the days of the Boer War. Haden discovered his loss as soon

1859]

## JAMES McNEILL WHISTLER

as he got home and, in a rage, hurried after them to the studio. But when he saw it there on an easel, when, instead of attempting to hide it, Legros was openly restoring the perspective according to his idea, well, there was nothing to say. All the same, it must have been aggravating.

Haden even endured Ernest, who had not yet caught up with the seasons, and who went about in terror of the butler, taking his daily walks in slippers rather than expose his boots to the servants, and enchanting Whistler by asking : “ *Mais, mon cher, qu'est que c'est que cette espèce de cataracte de Niagara?* ” when Haden turned on the shower-bath in the morning.

Whistler fell in at once with the English students and their friends whom he had known in Paris : Poynter, Armstrong, Luke and Aleco Ionides. Du Maurier came back from Antwerp in 1860, and for several months he and Whistler lived together in Newman Street. Mr. Armstrong remembers their studio, with a rope like a clothes-line stretched across, and, floating from it, a bit of brocade no bigger than a handkerchief, which was their curtain to shut off the corner used as bedroom. There was hardly ever a chair to sit on, and often with the brocade a towel hung from the line : their decoration and drapery. Du Maurier's first *Punch* drawing—in a volume full of crinolines and Leech (vol. xxxix., October 6, 1860)—shows the two friends, shabby, smoking, calling at a photographer's, to be met with an indignant “ No smoking here, sirs ! ” followed by a severe “ Please to remember, gentlemen, that this is not a common Hartist's Studio ! ” The figure at the door, with curly hair, top hat, glass in his eye, hands behind his back holding the forbidden cigarette, is unmistakably Whistler : a portrait even to those who did not know him in his youth.

“ Nearly always, on Sunday, he used to come to our house,” Mr. Ionides tells us, and there was no more delightful house in London. Mr. Alexander Ionides, the father, was a wealthy

## THE BEGINNINGS IN LONDON

merchant with a talent for gathering about him all the interesting people in town or passing through, especially artists, musicians, actors and authors. Mr. Luke Ionides says that Whistler came also to their evenings and took part in their private theatricals, and there remains the record of one performance in a programme designed by Du Maurier, with a drawing of himself, Whistler and Aleco Ionides at the top, while Luke Ionides and his sister, Mrs. Coronio, stand below, with the scroll of the *dramatis personæ* between them. He delighted in their masquerades and fancy dress balls, once mystifying everybody by appearing in two different costumes in the course of the evening, and winding up as a sweep. He himself never lost his joy in the memory of Alma-Tadema, on another of these occasions, as an "Ancient Roman," in toga and eye-glasses, crowned with flowers—"amazing," Whistler said, "with his bare feet and St. John's Wooden eye!"

Mr. Arthur Severn writes us :

"My first recollection of Whistler was at his brother-in-law's, Seymour Haden (he and Du Maurier were looking over some *Liber Studiorum* engravings), and then at Arthur Lewis' parties on Campden Hill, charming gatherings of talented men of all kinds, with plenty of listeners and sympathisers to applaud. It was at these parties the Moray Minstrels used to sing, conducted by John Foster, and when they were resting any one who could do anything was put up. Du Maurier with Harold Sower used to sing a duet, *Les Deux Aveugles* ; Grossmith half-killed us with laughter (it was at these parties he first came out). Stacy Marks, too, was always a great attraction, but towards the end of the evening, when we were all thoroughly in accord about everything, there used to be drowning yells and shouts for Whistler, the eccentric Whistler ! He used to be seized and stood up on a high stool, where he assumed the most irresistibly comic look, put his glass in his eye, and surveyed the multitude, who only screamed and yelled the more. When silence reigned he would begin to sing in the most curious way, suiting the action to the words with his small, thin, sensitive hands. His songs were in

## JAMES McNEILL WHISTLER

*argot* French, imitations of what he had heard in low *cabarets* on the Seine when he was at work there. What Whistler and Marks did was so entirely themselves and nobody else, so original or quaint, that they were certainly the favourites."

"Breezy, buoyant and debonnair, sunny and affectionate," he seemed to George Boughton, who could not remember the time when "Whistler's sayings and doings did not fill the artistic air," nor when he failed to give a personal touch, a "something distinct" to his appearance. His "cool suit of linen duck and his jaunty straw hat" were then conspicuous in London, where any eccentricity of dress is more startling than in Paris. In the Latin Quarter, Whistler had been able to develop a peculiarity, or individuality, already noticeable before he left America. Boughton refers to a flying trip to Paris at this period, when he was "flush of money and lovely in attire." Other old friends recall meeting him, armed with two umbrellas, a white and a black, his practical, if sensational, preparation for all weathers. Val Prinsep speaks of the pink silk handkerchief stuck in his waistcoat, but this must have been later. "A brisk little man, conspicuous from his swarthy complexion, his gleaming eye-glass, and his shock of curly black hair, amid which shone his celebrated white lock" is Val Prinsep's further description of him in the 'fifties. But the white lock is not seen in any contemporary painting or etching. It was first introduced, as far as we can discover, in his portrait owned by Mr. McCulloch and in the etching, *Whistler with the White Lock*, 1879, though there may be some earlier drawings showing it. We never asked him about it, and his family, friends and contemporaries, whom we have asked, cannot explain it. Some say that it was a birth-mark, others that he dyed all his hair save the one lock. Many, seeing him for the first time, mistook it for a floating feather. He used to call it the *Mèche de Silas*, and one explanation it amused him to give was that the

80 [1860

## THE BEGINNINGS IN LONDON

Devil caught those whom he would preserve by a lock of hair which turned it white. Whatever its origin, Whistler always cherished it with the greatest care.

Whistler had stumbled upon a period in England when, though painters prospered, art was at a low ebb. Pre-Raphaelitism was on the wane. Millais' election to the Royal Academy had dissolved the Round Table, as Rossetti said. Rossetti had dissociated himself from any phase or movement. Holman Hunt was being approached to write a history of Pre-Raphaelitism, as of something quite past. No younger group of independents had come to take their place. Of course here and there were interesting young men, each working in his own fashion: Charles Keene, Boyd Houghton, Albert Moore, and, a little later, Fred Walker and George Mason. But with the exception of Charles Keene, whom he always liked, and Albert Moore, whom he was soon suggesting to Fantin as Legros' successor in the Society of Three, Whistler saw little of them. He certainly said little about them. Academicians were then at the high tide of mid-Victorian success and sentiment. They puzzled Whistler no less than he puzzled them.

"Well, you know, it was this way. When I came to London I was received graciously by the painters. Then there was coldness, and I could not understand. Artists locked themselves up in their studios—opened the doors only on the chain; if they met each other in the street they barely spoke. Models went round silent, with an air of mystery. When I asked one where she had been posing, she said, 'To Frith and Watts and Tadema.' 'Golly! what a crew!' I said. 'And that's just what they says when I told 'em I was a'posing to you!' Then I found out the mystery: it was the moment of painting the Royal Academy picture. Each man was afraid his subject might be stolen. It was the great era of the subject. And, at last, on Varnishing Day, there was the subject in all its glory—wonderful! The British subject! Like a flash the inspiration came—the Inventor!—and in the Academy there you saw him: the familiar model—the

## JAMES McNEILL WHISTLER

soldier or the Italian—and there he sat, hands on knees, head bent, brows knit, eyes staring ; in a corner, angels and cogwheels and things ; close to him his wife, cold, ragged, the baby in her arms—he had failed ! The story was told—it was clear as day—amazing !—the British subject !—What.”

Into this riot of subject in the Academy of 1860, *At the Piano* was sent, with five prints : *Monsieur Astruc, Rédacteur du Journal l'Artiste*, an unidentified portrait, and three of the Thames set. Whistler had given *At the Piano*, the portrait of his sister and niece, to Seymour Haden : in a way, he said,

“ Well, you know, it was hanging there, but I had no particular satisfaction in that. Haden just then was playing the authority on art, and he could never look at it without pointing out its faults and telling me it never would get into the Academy—that was certain.”

However, at the Academy it was accepted, Whistler's first picture in an English exhibition. The Salon was not held then every year, and he could not hope to repeat his success in Paris. But in London, *At the Piano* was as much talked about as at Bonvin's. It was bought by John Phillip, the Academician (no relation whatever to the family into which Whistler afterwards married). Phillip had just returned from Spain, with,

“ Well, you know—Spanish notions about things, and he asked who had painted the picture, and they told him, a youth no one knew about, who had appeared from no one knew where. Phillip looked up my address in the catalogue, and wrote to me at once to say he would like to buy it, and what was its price ? I answered in a letter which I am sure, even then, must have been very beautiful. I said that, in my youth and inexperience, I did not know about these things, and I would leave to him the question of price. Phillip sent me thirty pounds ; when the picture was last sold, to Mr. Davis, it brought two thousand eight hundred ! ”

Thackeray, Mrs. Richmond Ritchie tells us, “ went to see the picture of Annie Haden standing by the piano, and

## THE BEGINNINGS IN LONDON

admired it beyond words, and stood looking at it with real delight and appreciation." It was the "only thing" George Boughton "brought vividly away in his memories" of the Academy. The critics could not ignore it. "It at once made an impression," Mr. W. M. Rossetti wrote. As "an eccentric uncouth, smudgy, phantom-like picture of a lady at a piano-forte, with a ghostly looking child in a white frock looking on," it struck the *Daily Telegraph*. But the *Athenæum*, having discovered the "admirable etchings" in the octagon room, managed to see in the

"*Piano Picture*, despite a recklessly bold manner and sketchiness of the wildest and roughest kind, a genuine feeling for colour and a splendid power of composition and design, which evince a just appreciation of nature very rare among artists. If the observer will look for a little while at this singular production, he will perceive that it 'opens out' just as a stereoscopic view will—an excellent quality due to the artist's feeling for atmosphere and judicious gradation of light."

We quote these criticisms because the general idea is that Whistler waited long for notice. He was always noticed, both praised and blamed, never ignored, after 1859.

Whistler went back to Paris late in that year. December 1859 is the date of his *Isle de la Cité*, etched from the Galerie d'Apollon in the Louvre, with Notre Dame in the distance, and the Seine and its bridges between. It was his only attempt to rival Méryon, and he succeeded very badly. The fact that he gave it up when half done shows that he thought so himself. Besides, he was much less in Paris now, for though he always preferred life there, he had found his subjects in London, and that was why his visits gradually lengthened, why he could never stay away for long, why he soon made London his home, as it continued to be, except for a few intervals, until his death. It was not the people he cared for, nor the customs. He was drawn by the beauty of the

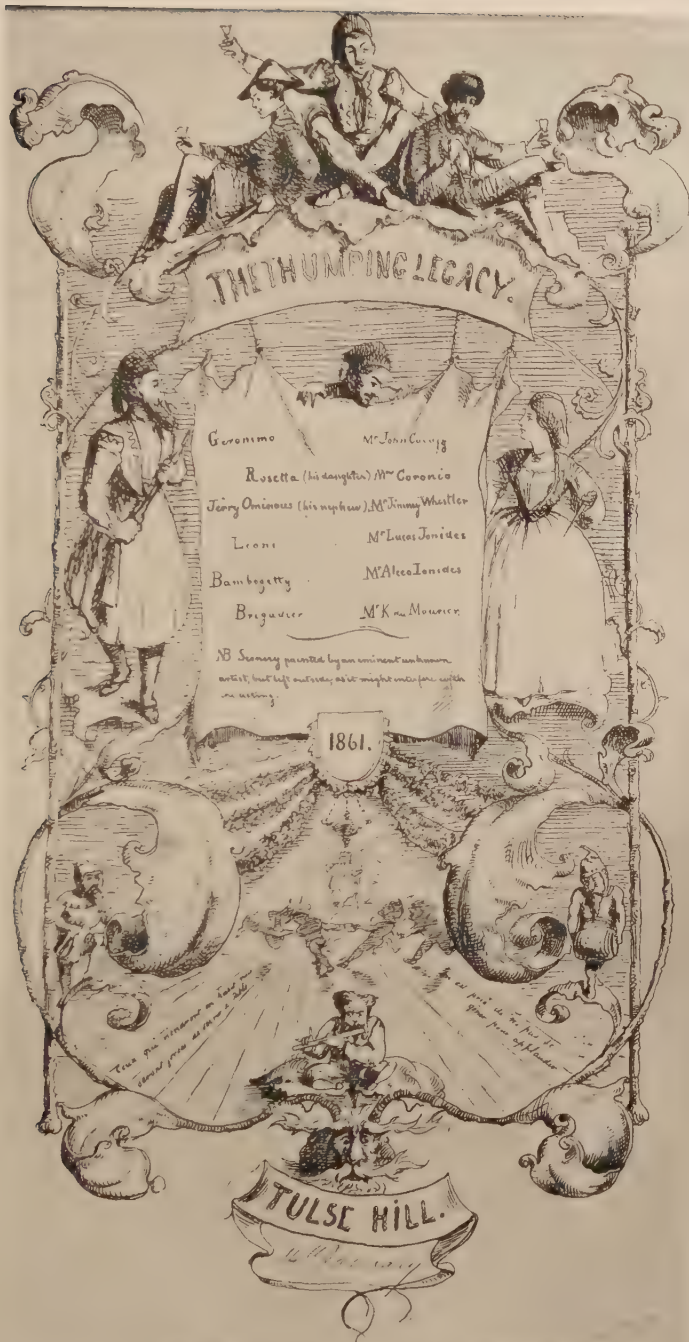
1860]

## JAMES McNEILL WHISTLER

place that not even Constable or Turner had felt with the same intensity and understanding.

He was already at work on the river. In these first years he dated his prints and pictures, as he seldom did later, and 1859 is bitten on one after another of the Thames plates. He saw the river as no one had seen it before, in all its grime and glitter, with its forest of shipping, its endless procession of barges, its grim warehouses, its huge docks, its little waterside inns. And, as he saw it, so he rendered it, as no one ever had before—as it is. It was left to the American youth to do for London what Rembrandt had done for Amsterdam. There were eleven plates on the Thames during this year alone. To make them, he wandered from Greenwich to Westminster; they included etchings like *Black Lion Wharf*, *Tyzac*, *Whiteley and Co.*, which he never excelled at any period; and in each the warehouses or bridges, the docks or ships, or whatever incidents of river life appealed to him by the way, are worked out with a mass and marvel of detail. The Pre-Raphaelites, in their first ardour, had never been more faithful to Nature and more minute in their study of her. The series was a wonderful achievement for the young man of twenty-five, never known to work by his English fellow students, a wonderful achievement for an artist of any age.

Those who thought he idled in Paris were as sure of his application in London. "On the Thames, he worked tremendously," Mr. Armstrong says, "not caring then to have people about or to let any one see too much of his methods." He stayed for months at Wapping, to be near his subjects, though not cutting himself off entirely from his friends. Sir Edward Poynter, Mr. Ionides, M. Legros, Du Maurier visited him. Mr. Ionides recalls long drives, down by the Tower and the London Docks to get to the place, as out of the way now as then. He says Whistler lived in



DESIGN FOR PROGRAMME BY DU MAURIER  
(Pen and Ink)



## THE BEGINNINGS IN LONDON

a little inn, rather rough, frequented by skippers and bargees, close to Wapping steamboat pier. But there is no doubt that much of his work was done from Cherry Gardens, on the other side of the river. Unfortunately it was not until after his death that we looked into this matter. At any rate, if he lived at Wapping, he worked a great deal at Cherry Gardens, also often from boats and barges, he told us, and this one can see in the prints. Sometimes he would get stranded in the mud, and at others cut off by the tide. "When his friends came," Mr. Armstong writes us, "they dined at an *ordinary* there used to be. People who had business at the wharves in the neighbourhood dined there, and Jimmie's descriptions of the company were always humorous." Mr. Ionides drove down once for a dinner-party Whistler gave at his inn :

"The landlord and several bargee guests were invited. Du Maurier was there also, and after dinner we had songs and sentiments. Jimmie proposed the landlord's health—he felt flattered, but we were in fits of laughter. The landlord was very jealous of his wife, who was rather inclined to flirt with Jimmie, and the whole speech was chaff of a soothing kind that he never suspected."

Another and more frequent visitor to Wapping was Sergeant Thomas, one of those patrons who recognise the young artist and appear when this recognition is most needed. He bought drawings and prints from Holman Hunt and Legros when they were scarcely known, and he helped Millais through difficult days. Whistler had issued his *French Set* of etchings in London in 1859 : *Twelve Etchings from Nature by James Abbott Whistler, London. Published by J. A. Whistler. At No. 62 Sloane Street*, which was Haden's house. The price, as in Paris, was *for Artist's Proofs on India, two guineas*. Sergeant Thomas saw the prints and their merit, got to know Whistler, and arranged for the further publication of the *French Set*, and the Thames 1860]

## JAMES McNEILL WHISTLER

etchings, at first issued separately from the shop at No. 39 Old Bond Street, where he had established his son, Edmund Thomas, as art dealer.

Mr. Percy Thomas, a younger son, has told us that, as a little fellow, he used to go with his father by boat to Wapping, and that his father and brother posed for two of the figures—the third is Whistler—in *The Little Pool*. He has also told us that much of the printing was done at 39 Old Bond Street, where the family lived in the upper part of the house. A press was in one of the small rooms, and Whistler would come in the evening, when he happened to be in town, to bite and try his plates. Sometimes he would not get to work until half-past ten or eleven. In those days, he always put his plate in a deep bath of acid, still keeping to the technical methods of the Coast Survey.\* Sergeant Thomas, in his son's words, was "great for port wine," and he would fill a glass for Whistler, and Whistler would put the glass by the bath, and then work a little on the plate and then stop to sip the port, and he would say: "Excellent! very good indeed!" and they never knew whether he meant the wine or the work. And always, the charm of his manner and his courtesy made it delightful to do anything for him. Sergeant Thomas brought Delâtre over from Paris. He was the only man, according to Thomas, who could print Whistler's etchings as the artist would have printed them himself. "Nobody," the son wrote in his catalogue, "has ever printed Mr. Whistler's etchings with success except himself and M. Delâtre," and to-day many people are of the same opinion. Whistler's relations with Sergeant and Edmund Thomas were pleasant while they lasted. But they did not last long. The son cared less for art than the law, and in his shop he

\* We have since learned that the Coast Survey plates were banked up with wax and the acid poured over them. This is supposed to have been the method of Rembrandt.

## THE BEGINNINGS IN LONDON

would sit at his desk reading his law books, never looking up nor leaving them, unless some one asked the price of a print or drawing. A successful business is not run on those lines, and in the course of a few years he gave up art altogether for the law, to his own great advantage.

## CHAPTER IX. THE BEGINNINGS IN LONDON. THE YEARS EIGHTEEN FIFTY-NINE TO EIGHTEEN SIXTY-THREE CONTINUED

WHISTLER, in 1860, devoted much time to painting on the river and less to etching, though the fine *Rotherhithe* belongs to this year. One picture he described in a letter to Fantin. "*Chut ! n'en parle pas à Courbet*" was his warning, as if he was afraid to trust so good a subject to any one. It was to be a masterpiece, he had painted it already three times, and he sent a sketch, which M. Duret has reproduced in his *Whistler*. M. Duret, unable to trace the picture, thought he might perhaps never have carried it beyond the sketch. But it was finished: the *Wapping* shown in the Academy of 1864, a proof of how long, even then, Whistler often kept his pictures before exhibiting them. In 1867, he sent it to the Paris Exhibition. It was bought by Mr. Thomas Winans, taken to Baltimore, where it is now the property of his daughter, Mrs. Hutton. Whistler wanted to exhibit it at Goupil's in 1892, but could not get it over in time. Never seen in England, nor on the Continent, since 1867, it has been practically forgotten. It was painted from an inn, The Angel, on the water-side at Cherry Gardens, which exists to-day, one of a row of old houses with overhanging balconies. In the foreground, in a shadowy corner of the inn balcony, is a sailor, for whom a workman from Greaves' shipbuilding yard, Chelsea, sat; next to him, M. Legros, and, her back turned to the Thames, the girl with

88

[1860



WAPPING



## THE BEGINNINGS IN LONDON

copper-coloured hair, of whose strange beauty Whistler wrote to Fantin, "Joe," the model afterwards for *The White Girl* and *The Little White Girl*. Beyond, on the river, are the little square-rigged ships that so often anchor there, and on the opposite side is the long line of Wapping warehouses, which gave the name to the picture. One who saw it then writes that artists feared "Joe's" slightly open shirt would prevent the picture being hung in the Royal Academy. But Whistler insisted that, if it was rejected on that account, he would open the shirt more and more every year until he was elected and hung it himself.

He also painted *The Thames in Ice* this year (1860), apparently, from the same inn at Cherry Gardens. It was called, when first exhibited, *The Twenty-fifth of December, 1860, on the Thames*. For an Idle Apprentice, it was a curious way of spending Christmas Day. Whistler told us that Haden bought it for ten pounds, ample pay, he thought: three pounds for each of the three days Whistler spent in painting it, and a pound over. To Whistler, the pay seemed anything but ample. "You know," he said to us, "my sister was in the house, and women have their ideas about things, and I did what she wanted, to please her!" The picture is now in Mr. Freer's collection.

Two other pictures of 1860 are the portrait of Mr. Luke Ionides with long, brown beard, and *The Music Room*. In both, the influence of the Louvre and Courbet is evident. The portrait has the heavy painting of *At the Piano*, though it is much more brilliant. But the other picture marks a tremendous advance.

Fantin could not have been more conscientious in rendering the life about him exactly as he found it than Whistler was in *The Music Room*; only, the room in the London house, with its gay chintz curtains and draperies, has none of the sombre simplicity of the interior where Fantin's sisters sit

1860]

## JAMES McNEILL WHISTLER

with their embroidery and books. Fantin's home gave him an austerity he knew how to make beautiful; to Whistler, the Hadens' house gave colour—*Harmony in Green and Rose* was his later title for the picture—and clear, cool light. He emphasised the gaiety by introducing a strong black note in the riding-habit of the standing figure, Miss Boot, a connection of the Hadens by marriage, repeating it in the reflection of Lady Haden in the mirror, while the cool light from the window falls on "wonderful little Annie," in the same white frock she wears in *The Piano Picture*. Mrs. Thynne (Annie Haden) writes us:

"I was very young at the time of the music-room pictures being painted, and beyond the fact of not minding sitting, in spite of the interminable length of time, I do not know that I can say more. It was a distinctly amusing time for me. He was always so delightful and enjoyed the 'no lessons' as much as I did. One day in *The Morning Call* [the first name of *The Music Room*] \* picture, I did get tired without knowing it, and suddenly dissolved into tears, whereupon he was full of the most tender remorse, and rushed out and bought me a lovely Russia leather writing set, which I am using at this very moment! The actual music-room still exists in Sloane Street, though the present owners have enlarged it, and the date of the picture must have been in '60 or '61, after his return from Paris. It was then he gave me the pencil sketches I lent to the London Memorial Exhibition. I had kept them in an album he had also brought me from Paris, with my name in gold, stamped outside, of which I was very proud. We were always good friends, and I have nothing all through those early days but the most delightful remembrance of him."

The picture became the property of Whistler's niece, Mrs. Réveillon, George Whistler's daughter, and was carried off to St. Petersburg, never to return to London until Whistler's exhibition at the Goupil Gallery in 1892. It is now owned by Colonel Hecker of Detroit.

\* It will be noted that this picture, within a very few years, was described under three titles. The confusion now existing in titles made or accepted by Whistler was the result of his own vagueness.



THE MUSIC ROOM  
*(Harmony in Green and Rose)*



## THE BEGINNINGS IN LONDON

Lately it has become the fashion to say that Whistler had not mastered his trade, and could not manage his materials in oils. These early pictures are technically as accomplished as the work of any of his contemporaries, and statements that he knew just enough for his own needs are altogether beside the mark. Whistler never was taught, few artists are, the chemistry of his trade, and some of his paintings have suffered in consequence. *The Music Room* and *The Thames in Ice*, so far as we can remember, are wonderfully fresh and not cracked at all. They were probably painted more directly, certainly more thinly, than the *Wapping*, in which the paint seems to be as thickly piled as in the *Piano Picture*, which is also cracked. This no doubt came from his working over them repeatedly, probably on bad grounds. He had the painting of *Wapping* by him four years before he exhibited it. Though started down the river in 1860, it contains a portrait of one of Greaves' men, whom he did not see for a year or two afterwards. Of two pictures painted at the same period, one, like the *Wapping*, may be badly cracked, and another, like the *Thames in Ice*, may be in perfect condition, which is probably due to his want of knowledge of the chemical properties of his paints and mediums. Later in life, Whistler gave great attention to this matter.

Mrs. Thynne stood for another portrait in 1860, the beautiful dry-point *Annie Haden*, in big crinoline and soup-plate hat, and this was the year when Whistler made the portraits of his friend Axenfeld, the wood-engraver Riault, and "Mr. Mann." The next year, 1861, there were more plates on the river, now on the Upper as well as the Lower Thames. All this work was making him known to English etchers and printers. For two of the plates of 1861, the Junior Etching Club found a place when, a year later, they published *Passages from Modern English Poets*, with their etchings as illustrations; and Whistler, occasionally trying  
1861]

## JAMES McNEILL WHISTLER

his plates at the press of Day and Son, came into contact with the man, then a lad, he afterwards called "the best printer in England," Mr. Frederick Goulding, who sends us the following recollections of the time :

"What can I say about Whistler printing? I mind me I first knew him about 1859, when he used to come to the printing house where I was apprenticed (the *old* firm of Day and Son—in Gate Street, Lincoln's Inn Fields) and print himself at my father's press. I used sometimes to act as his 'devil' grinding the ink, and turning the press, and so on.

"I think the first plate I actually 'proved' for him was in 1861—*The Punt*—he used to come frequently in the eighteens-seventies, and I then printed a good many plates for him.

"After that he had a printing and etching room at the top of his house in Cheyne Walk, where I used to go and print with him, and afterwards at the White House at Tite Street, where we spent many a pleasant hour printing, and many a bit of fun we had in experimenting and printing in different ways.

"After that he practically took to printing his plates himself, and put into the printing his own individuality as much as in all the other work he did. No two proofs were ever alike—nor do I expect he intended them to be—but they were all Whistler.

"Of course, at different periods of his life, he varied the way of printing, as he did his etching. Sometimes it was very 'fat' printing—at other times he would depend absolutely on his etched lines. This more especially during the latter part of his life—but wherever, or whatever, he printed, it was always individual, and always Whistler."

Whistler once told us that he worked about three weeks on each of the Thames plates. He therefore must have spent on dated plates alone thirty-six weeks in 1861, leaving but fourteen weeks for other work and for play. Some of them are much less elaborate than the *Drouet* which, M. Drouet says, was done in five hours, so that it seems difficult to reconcile the two statements. But then it was about the *Black Lion Wharf*, one of the fullest of detail, that we especially asked Whistler. We had many discussions

## THE BEGINNINGS IN LONDON

with him about them. Whistler always maintained that they were very youthful performances, and J. as strongly maintained that that had nothing to do with the matter; that he never surpassed the wonderful drawing and composition and biting. He always insisted that his later work in Venice and in Holland was a great development, a great advance, and his final answer always was: "Well, you like them more than I do!" But there is no doubt that the Thames plates, notably the *Black Lion Wharf*, have, for artistic rendering of inartistic subjects, and for perfect biting, never been approached by anybody.

Whistler saw something of the Upper Thames when he stayed with Mr. and Mrs. Edwin Edwards, whose house at Sunbury, was always a pleasant one to visit. There he was sure to meet friends, two of whom figure in his dry-point *Encamping*: M. W. Ridley, the artist and Traer, Haden's assistant, not "Freer," as he has long masqueraded in Mr. Wedmore's pages. Whistler introduced Fantin to Mr. and Mrs. Edwards. To the "*jolies journées chez Edwards à Sunbury*" Fantin refers in a note for 1861. Mrs. Edwards wrote us shortly before her death:

"Whistler often came to see me, turning up always when least expected, perhaps driving down in a hansom cab from London. At that time there was no railway at Sunbury; Hampton Court three miles distant. He might send a line to be met by boat at Hampton Court. He was always very eccentric."

Doubtless the driving down was an eccentricity. But Whistler knew he might see some "foolish sunset," or a Nocturne, on the way, and so the drive was worth it to him. "We had a large boat with waterproof cover," Mrs. Edwards added; "my husband and friends several times went up the river and slept in the boat. Whistler went once," when he probably did the plate *Encamping*, and certainly, in Mrs. Edwards' words, "got rheumatism." It had been his 1861]

## JAMES McNEILL WHISTLER

trouble ever since the St. Petersburg days. He could not risk exposure.

Whistler, though not yet settled in London, sent work regularly to the Academy, where it was an unfailing cause of difference among the critics. He showed his *Mère Gérard* (Mr. Swinburne's picture) in 1861. It is curious to read some of the criticisms. The *Athenæum* described the picture as "a fine, powerful-toned and eminently characteristic study." The *Daily Telegraph* thought it

"far fitter hung over the stove in the studio than exhibited at the Royal Academy, though it is replete with evidence of genius and study. If Mr. Whistler would leave off using mud and clay on his palette and paint cleanly, like a gentleman, we should be happy to bestow any amount of praise on him, for he has all the elements of a great artist in his composition. But we must protest against his soiled and miry ways."

It seemed a good, serious study of an old woman, and nothing more, when we saw it in the London Memorial Exhibition, and the appallingly low level of the Academy alone can explain the attention it attracted.

Whistler was back in France in the summer of 1861, painting *The Coast of Brittany*, a picture that might have been signed by Courbet, an arrangement in brown under a cloudy sky, a stretch of sand in the foreground, black and brown rocks where a peasant girl sleeps, and a blue sea beyond. It was "a beautiful thing," Whistler said once when writing of it years afterwards. At Perros Guirec he made his splendid dry-point, *The Forge*. Another print of this year is the rare dry-point of "Joe," who, for a while, reappeared in Whistler's work as often as Saskia in Rembrandt's. She was Irish, a Roman Catholic. Her father has been described to us as a sort of Captain Costigan, and "Joe"—Joanna, Mrs. Abbott—as a woman of next to no education, but of keen intelligence who, before she had ceased to sit to Whistler, knew more about painting than many painters, had become



THE COAST OF BRITTANY  
*(Alone with the Tide)*



THE BLUE WAVE  
*(Harmony in Blue and Silver)*



## THE BEGINNINGS IN LONDON

well read, and had great charm of manner. Her value to Whistler as a model was enormous, and she was an important element in his life during the first London years. She was with him in France in 1861-2, going to Paris in the winter to give him sittings for the big *White Girl*, which he had begun and was painting in a studio he took for the purpose in the Boulevard des Batignolles, and hung, it is said, all in white. Courbet met her, and, looking at the copper-coloured hair, was forced to see beauty in the beautiful. He painted her twice, though perhaps not that winter; once as *La Belle Irlandaise*, and once as *Jo, femme d'Irlande*. Whistler's small study of *Joe, Note Blanche*, lent by Mrs. Sickert to the Paris Memorial Exhibition, was doubtless done in the Boulevard des Batignolles in 1861, for the technique is not only like Courbet's, but somewhat resembles that of the *Piano Picture*. M. Drouet remembers breakfasts in the studio, Whistler cooking.

He fell ill before the end of the winter. Miss Chapman says he was poisoned by the white lead he used in the picture. Her brother, a doctor, recommended a journey to the Pyrenees, where some of his family were spending the winter. At Guéthary, Whistler was almost drowned when bathing, carried out by the undertow, as he wrote to Fantin. It was sunset, the sea was very rough, he was

“caught in the huge waves, swallowing gallons of salt water I swam and I swam, and the more I swam the less near I came to the shore. Ah! my dear Fantin, to feel my efforts useless and to know people were looking on saying, ‘But the Monsieur amuses himself, he must be strong!’ I cry, I scream in despair—I disappear three, four times. At last they understand. A brave railroad man rushes to me, and is rolled over twice on the sands. My model hears the call, arrives at a gallop, jumps in the sea like a Newfoundland, manages to catch me by the foot, and the two pull me out.” \*

\* See Duret's *Whistler*.

## JAMES McNEILL WHISTLER

At Biarritz, he painted *The Blue Wave*, a great sea rolling in and breaking on the shore under a fine sky, but quite unlike the *Coast of Brittany*, though Courbet's influence is still evident in the technique. Whistler painted few pictures in which the composition the arrangement, is more obvious. It is altogether an extraordinary piece of work and is owned now by Mr. Alfred Attmore Pope. At Fuenterrabia Whistler was in Spain, for the first and only time; Spaniards from the *Opéra-Comique* in the street, men in *béret* and red blouse, children like little Turks. He wanted to go further, to Madrid, and he urged Fantin to join him. Together they should look at *The Lances* and *The Spinners* as together they had studied at the Louvre. In another letter, he promised to describe Velasquez to Fantin, to bring back photographs. Such "glorious painting" is to be copied. "*Ah! mon cher, comme il a du travailler,*" he winds up in his enthusiasm. But the journey ended at Fuenterrabia. Fantin could not join him. Madrid was put off for another spring, for ever, as it turned out, though the journey was for ever being planned anew.

Whistler sent *The White Girl* to the Academy of 1862, with *The Twenty-fifth of December 1860 on the Thames*, *Alone with the Tide*, the first title of *The Coast of Brittany*, and one etching, *Rotherhithe*. *The White Girl* was rejected. The two other pictures and the print were accepted, hung and praised. The *Athenæum* compared the *Rotherhithe* to Rembrandt. Whistler could scarcely be mentioned as an etcher without this comparison; since Rembrandt his were "the most striking and original" etchings, every one then agreed, Mr. W. M. Rossetti being among the first in England to say so boldly. *Alone with the Tide* was approved as "perfectly expressed," and *The Twenty-fifth of December*, as broad and vigorous, though perhaps vigour was pushed over "the bounds of coarseness to become mere dash." Other work he showed elsewhere



THE THAMES IN ICE  
(The 25th of December 1860, on the Thames)



## THE BEGINNINGS IN LONDON

was also praised. *The Punt* and *Sketching*, published in *Passages from Modern English Poets*, were at once singled out for admiration. *Thames Warehouses* and *Black Lion Wharf* won him immediate recognition as "the most admirable etcher of the present day," when sent to South Kensington Museum where International Exhibitions were held during several years. *The White Girl* alone failed to please.

In nothing had he been so completely himself as in this picture. The artist is born to pick and choose, and group with science, the elements contained in Nature that the result may be beautiful, he wrote long afterward in the *Ten o'Clock*, and *The White Girl* was his first attempt to conform to a principle no one ever put so clearly into words. It was simply an attempt, we know now, comparing the painting to the symphonies and harmonies that came after. But at the time it was disquieting in its defiance of accepted formulas. It was without subject, according to Victorian standards, and the arrangement of white upon white was more bewildering even than the minute detail of the Pre-Raphaelites. This summer (1862) the Berners Street Gallery was opened, "with the avowed purpose of placing before the public the works of young artists who may not have access to the ordinary galleries." MacIise, Egg, Frith, Cooper, Poynter worked their way in. But the manager had the courage to exhibit *The White Girl*, stating in the catalogue that the Academy had refused it. The *Athenæum* was independent enough to say that it was the most prominent picture in the collection, though not the most perfect, for,

"able as this bizarre production shows Mr. Whistler to be, we are certain that in a very few years he will recognise the reasonableness of its rejection. It is one of the most incomplete paintings we ever met with. A woman in a quaint morning dress of white, with her hair about her shoulders, stands alone in a background of nothing in particular. But for the rich vigour of the textures, we might conceive this to be some old portrait by Zuccherò, or

## JAMES McNEILL WHISTLER

a pupil of his, practising in a provincial town. The face is well done, but it is not that of Mr. Wilkie Collins' *Woman in White*."

This criticism is not only characteristic of contemporary opinion, but interesting as having brought in answer, from Whistler, the first, as far as we can discover, of his long series of letters to the press. He wrote that he had no intention of illustrating Mr. Wilkie Collins' novel, which it happened he had never read, and that his picture represented merely a girl in white standing in front of a white curtain. The critics, not yet his enemies, were spared the sting of his wit. They, however, expressed disapproval strongly enough for him to tell his friends that *The White Girl* enjoyed a *succès d'exécration*.

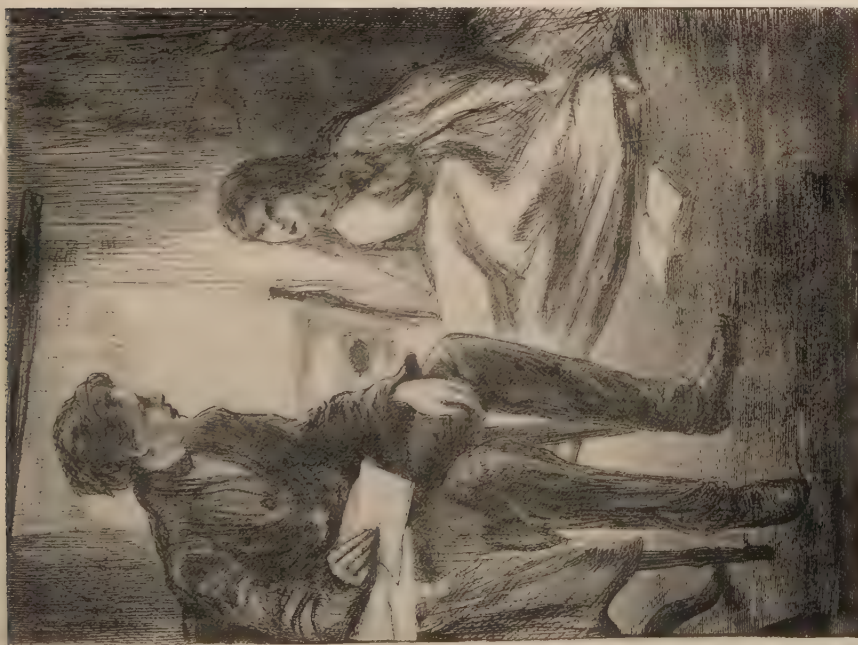
A very different sort of success awaited his Thames etchings in Paris, where they were shown in a dealer's gallery. Baudelaire saw them, and understood, as he was the first to understand the work of Manet, Poe, Wagner, and so many others. He wrote :

"*Tout récemment, un jeune artiste américain, M. Whistler, exposait à la galerie Martinet une série d'eaux fortes, subtiles, éveillées comme l'improvisation et l'inspiration, représentant les bords de la Tamise ; merveilleux fouillis d'agrès, de vergues, de cordages ; chaos de brumes, de fourneaux et de fumées tire-bouchonnées ; poésie profonde et compliquée d'une vaste capitale.*"

According to Mr. W. M. Rossetti, Whistler was then living in Queen's Road, Chelsea. He writes us :

"I fancy that the houses in Queen's Road have been much altered since Whistler was there in 1862-63. They were then low (say two-storied), quite old-fashioned houses, of a cosy, homely character, with small fore-courts. I have a kind of idea that Whistler's house was No. 12, but this is quite uncertain to me \*

\* Not only have the houses been much altered, but the very name of the street has changed, and Queen's Road is now Royal Hospital Road. The present No. 12 corresponds to Mr. Rossetti's description, but we think it more likely—and he does too—that Whistler lived in one of the little brick cottages of Paradise Row.



ILLUSTRATIONS TO "THE FIRST SERMON"

(From "Good Words")

(Wood Engravings)



## THE BEGINNINGS IN LONDON

As my brother and I were much in that neighbourhood, to and fro, prior to settling down in No. 16 Cheyne Walk, we came into contact with Whistler, who every now and then accompanied us on our jaunts. I forget how it was exactly that we got introduced to him; possibly by Mr. Algernon Swinburne, who was also to be an inmate of No. 16. Either (as I think) before meeting Whistler or just about the time we met him, we had seen one or two of his paintings. *At the Piano* must have been one; and we most heartily admired him, and discerned unmistakably that he was destined for renown."

The friendship may have led to Whistler's active interest in the black-and-white then being produced in England, for Rossetti and his little group had, in a way, revolutionised English illustration, and it was now held to be as dignified and as serious a form of art as any other. All the more brilliant of the younger men were working for the illustrated magazines, and it was natural that Whistler found a place among them. He made six drawings in all, and they were done in 1862. Four appeared in *Once a Week: The Major's Daughter, The Relief Fund in Lancashire, The Morning before the Massacre of St. Bartholomew, and Count Burekhardt*. Two were published in *Good Words*, illustrations to *The First Sermon*. They are drawn in pencil, pen and wash, are all full of character, and, in the use of line, are like his etchings. They were engraved by the Dalziel Brothers and Mr. Joseph Swain, the art editors. Mr. Strahan, the publisher of *Once a Week*, writes us:

"These illustrations were arranged for by Edward Dalziel, and I cannot say how he came to know the artist or his work, as Mr. Whistler was young then, and, as far as I know, had not contributed to any magazine. The average price we paid to artists was nine pounds, and we reckoned that the same amount had to be paid for engraving. As a matter of fact, the sum paid to Mr. Whistler was nine pounds for each drawing."

In any case, we doubt if he had more than rooms or lodgings. He gave us to understand that the house he took shortly after, in Lindsey Row, was his first in London.

1862]

99

## JAMES McNEILL WHISTLER

We showed Whistler once *The Morning before the Massacre of St. Bartholomew*. "Well, now—not bad, you know—not bad even then!" he said, following, with that expressive finger of his, the flowing line of the pose, and pointing to the hand lost in the draperies. This drawing and *The Major's Daughter* were the two he preferred in after years, and when J. was preparing *The History of Modern Illustration*, Whistler picked them out as "very pretty ones," that should be reproduced, though we remember his saying that, if but a single example of his work could be used, *The Morning before the Massacre* should be selected, for it was "as delicate as an etching, and altogether characteristic and personal." *The Count Burckhardt* he did not care for, insisting that he would rather not be represented at all if this were to be the only example given in the book. It was never a favourite of his, he added.

The four drawings of *Once a Week* were reprinted in Thornbury's *Legendary Ballads* in 1876. Thornbury implies that the drawings were made for it, and says of them :

"Some startling drawings by Mr. Whistler prove his singular power of hand, strong artistic feeling, and daring manner."

Our copy belonged to George Augustus Sala. On the margin of *The Morning before the Massacre* he wrote :

"Jemmy Whistler.—Clever, sketchy and incomplete, like everything he has done. A loaf of excellent fine flour, but slack-baked."

So Sala thought in 1883, and it is typical of the times.

Another important work of 1862 was *The Last of Old Westminster*. Mr. Arthur Severn knows more about it than any one, as his account to us explains :

"On my return from Rome to join my brother in his rooms in Manchester Buildings, on the Thames at Westminster Bridge, (where the New Scotland Yard now is), I found Whistler beginning his picture of Westminster Bridge. My brother had given him permission to use our sitting-room, with its bow-windows looking



ILLUSTRATIONS  
(From "Once a Week")  
(Wood Engravings)



## THE BEGINNINGS IN LONDON

over the river and towards the bridge. He was always most courteous and pleasant in manner, and it was most interesting to see him at work. The bridge was in perspective, still surrounded with piles, for it had only just been finished. It was the piles with their rich colour and delightful confusion that took his fancy, not the bridge, which hardly showed. He would look steadily at a pile for some time, then mix up the colour, then holding his brush quite at the end, with no mahlstick, make a downward stroke and the pile was done. I remember once his looking very carefully at a hansom cab that had pulled up for some purpose on the bridge, and in a few strokes he got the look of it perfectly. He was a long time over the picture, sometimes coming only once a week, and we got rather tired of it. One day some friends came to see it. He stood it against a table in an upright position for them to see, it suddenly fell on its face, much to my brother's disgust, as he had just got a new carpet. Luckily Whistler's sky was pretty dry, and I don't think the picture got any damage, and the artist was most good-natured about my brother's anxiety lest the carpet should have suffered.

"I had done some work at Rome. One of my drawings was of an evening subject on the Aventine Hill, reflected in the Tiber. It was very yellow—in fact, when I was painting it, a French corporal and two privates came to look over me, and I heard them ask their corporal what he thought of it. He shrugged his shoulders, and said: 'For my part, it is like an omelette.' I fancy Whistler rather thought the same, but was very kind in saying what he could. Then he asked me if I had any raw umber, to which I answered, no. Then he said: 'How can you ever expect to become a Royal Academician without raw umber?' "

*The Last of Old Westminster* was finished for the Academy of 1863, to which it was sent with six prints: *Weary*; *Old Westminster Bridge*; *Hungerford Bridge*; *Monsieur Becquet*; *The Forge*; *The Pool*. The dignity of composition in the picture and the vigour of handling, impressed all those who saw it in the London Memorial Exhibition, though they had to regret the shocking condition it then was in, cracked from one end to the other. It failed to impress Academicians in 1863, and was badly hung, as the prints also were, repro-  
1863]

## JAMES McNEILL WHISTLER

ductive work being then, as now, preferred to original etching. *The White Girl*, after its Berners Street success, was the picture Whistler chose for the Salon. He took it over to Paris himself, to Fantin's studio, there having it unrolled and framed. No one can now say, probably no one could then, why the strongest work of the strongest younger men was rejected from the Salon of 1863. Fantin, Legros, Manet, Bracquemond, Jongkind, Harpignies, Cazin, Jean-Paul Laurens, Vollon, Whistler, were all refused. It was a scandal; 1859 was nothing to it. The town was in an uproar which reached the ears of the Emperor. Martinet, the dealer, proposed to show the rejected pictures in his gallery. But before this was definitely arranged, Napoleon III. ordered that a *Salon des Refusés* should be held in the same building as the official Salon, the *Palais de l'Industrie*. The announcement was published in the *Moniteur* for April 24, 1863. The invitation to show was issued by the *Directeur-Général* of the Imperial Museums, and the exhibition opened on May 15. The success was as great as the scandal. The exhibition was the talk of the *cafés*; it was parodied as the *Club des Refusés* at the *Variétés*; every one rushed to the galleries. The rooms were crowded by artists, because, in the midst of much no doubt weak and foolish, the best work of the day was shown; by the public, because of the stir it made. The public laughed from a vague idea that it was a duty to laugh. The show was caricatured as the *Exposition des Comiques*, and it was said that never was a *succès pour rire* better deserved. Zola described, in *L'Œuvre*, the gaiety and cruelty of the crowd, always convulsed and hysterical in front of *La Dame en Blanc*. Hamerton wrote in the *Fine Arts Quarterly*:

“The hangers must have thought her particularly ugly, for they have given her a sort of place of honour, before an opening through which all pass, so that nobody misses her. I watched

## THE BEGINNINGS IN LONDON

several parties, to see the impression *The Woman in White* made on them. They all stopped instantly, struck with amazement. This for two or three seconds, then they always looked at each other and laughed. Here, for once, I have the happiness to be quite of the popular way of thinking."

On the other hand, Fernand Desnoyers, who wrote a pamphlet on the *Salon des Refusés*, thought that Whistler was "*le plus spirite des peintres*," and the picture the most original that had passed before the jury of the Salon, altogether remarkable, at once simple and fantastic, the portrait of a spirit, a medium, though of a beauty so peculiar that the public did not know whether to think it beautiful or ugly. Paul Mantz wrote that it was the most important picture in the exhibition, full of knowledge and strange charm, and his article in the *Gazette des Beaux-Arts* is the more interesting because he there describes the picture as a *Symphonie du Blanc* some years before Whistler called it so himself, seeing in it instead of eccentricity, only a carrying on of French traditions, for had not, a hundred years earlier, painters shown in the Salon similar studies of colour, of tone—of white upon white?

The picture hardly explained the sensation of its first appearance when we saw it with *Miss Alexander*, the *Mother*, *Carlyle*, *The Fur Jacket* and *Irving*, in the London Memorial Exhibition. But it seemed revolutionary enough in the 'sixties, to become the *clou* of the *Salon des Refusés*, though this was the last thing Whistler wanted it to be. It eclipsed even Manet's big *Déjeuner sur l'herbe*, then called *Le Bain*.

Whistler was in Amsterdam with Legros, looking at the Rembrandts with pleasure, at the Van der Helsts with disappointment, etching *Amsterdam from the Tolhuis*, no doubt hunting for old paper, and adding to his collection of blue and white, when the news came of the sensation his pictures had made in Paris, and he wrote at once to Fantin. He  
1863]

## JAMES McNEILL WHISTLER

longed to be in Paris and in the movement. It was a delight that the picture, slighted in London, should be honoured in Paris. He was all impatience to know what was said in the *Café de Bade*, the *café* of Manet and his friends, and by the critics.

To add to his triumph in Paris, official honours were falling to him in Holland and England. Some of his etchings were in an exhibition at The Hague, though he always said he did not know how they got there, and he was given one of three gold medals awarded to foreigners: his first medal. Though atrociously hung at the Academy, his prints were honoured at the British Museum, where as many as twelve were bought for the Print room in this one year.

The excitement did not keep him long from work, to which, as he wrote to Fantin, wandering was a drawback. He felt the need of his studio, of "the familiar all about him." The "familiar" he loved best was in London, and when he returned he began to look for a house of his own. It was fortunate for him that his mother was now persuaded to leave America and come to England. She had passed through the arduous times of the Civil War, in which Whistler took the keenest interest as a patriot and a "West Point man." She had been in Richmond with her younger son, William, a surgeon in the southern army, had run the blockade, and arrived in England just at this critical moment.

Whistler no longer made the Hadens' house his home. The relations of the brothers-in-law had become strained, as it was unavoidable they should, both being men of strong character and personality. There had been disputes about pictures, and descents upon the conventional household of strange creatures from Paris. Haden had had much to put up with, while Whistler, the artist, resented the criticism of Haden, the surgeon. One story we have from Whistler explains the relations between the two, and though he never



SOUVENIR OF VELASQUEZ  
*(Chalk Drawing)*



## THE BEGINNINGS IN LONDON

gave a date, it can be appropriately told here. Haden was always a little of the schoolmaster Whistler found him when they first met ; one's older relatives have a way of forgetting one can grow up. Once, when Whistler had done something more enormous than ever in Haden's eyes, he had been summoned to the mysterious room upstairs, and lectured until he refused to listen to another word. He started down the four flights of stairs, with Haden close behind, still lecturing. At last the front door was reached. And then—" Oh, dear ! " said Whistler, " I've left my hat upstairs, and now we have got to go all through this again ! "

As there was no further question of Whistler living with the Hadens, it was decided that he and his mother should live together, and some of his most delightful years were those that followed.

## CHAPTER X. CHELSEA DAYS. THE YEARS EIGHTEEN SIXTY-THREE TO EIGHTEEN SIXTY-SIX

WHISTLER'S first house in London was No. 7 Lindsey Row, Chelsea, now 101 Cheyne Walk. It adjoins the old palace of Lord Lindsey, which still stands, the original building divided into several houses, stuccoed and modernised, much of its stateliness gone, though the spacious stairway and part of the panelling have been preserved. Whistler's was a three-story house, with a garden in front, humble when compared with the palaces Academicians were building. "All these artists complain of nothing but the too great prosperity of the profession in these days," Hamerton wrote to his wife on one of his visits to London; "they tell me an artist's life is a princely one now." But Whistler lived his own life, and from his windows he could paint what he wanted. Only the road separated the house from the river; opposite was Battersea Church and a group of factory chimneys; old Battersea Bridge stretched across; and at night he could see the lights of Cremorne.

At the end of the Row, two doors from Whistler's house, the boat-builder, Greaves, lived. He had worked in Chelsea for years. He had rowed Turner about on the river, and his two sons were now to row Whistler. One of the sons, Mr. Walter Greaves, has told us that Mrs. Booth, a big, hard, coarse Scotchwoman, was always with Turner when he came for his boat. Turner would ask Greaves what kind of a day it was going to be, and if Greaves answered "Fine,"

## CHELSEA DAYS

he would get Greaves to row them across to Battersea Church, or to the fields, now Battersea Park. If Greaves was doubtful, Turner would say: "Well, Mrs. Booth, we won't go far;" and afterwards, for the sons—boys at the time—Turner in their memory was completely overshadowed by her. They had also known Martin, the painter of big, Scriptural *machines*, whose house was in the middle of the Row. It had a balcony, and on fine moonlight nights, or nights of dramatic skies, Greaves or one of the sons would knock him up, and keep on knocking until they saw the old man in his night-cap on the balcony, where he would get to work and paint the sky until daylight. Greaves remembered, too, Brunel, who built the *Great Eastern*, living at the end of the Row. Of other associations, dating a couple of centuries before his time, the little Moravian graveyard at the back was a reminder, for the old Lindsey palace had been one of the first refuges of Zinzendorf and the Brotherhood. The Row, indeed, was a place of history. But Whistler was to make it more famous than it ever had been.

The two Greaves, Walter and Harry, painted, and he had them in his studio, teaching them by letting them work with and for him. We have often heard him speak of them as his "first pupils." From them he learned to row—"He taught us to paint, and we taught him the waterman's jerk," Mr. Walter Greaves says. Whistler would start with them in the twilight, and sometimes stay on the river all night, lingering in the lights of Cremorne, drifting into the shadows of the old bridge, or else he was up with the dawn, throwing pebbles at their windows to wake them, and make them come and pull him up or down stream. At night, on the river and at Cremorne, he was never without brown paper, and black and white chalk, with which he made his notes for the Nocturnes and the seemingly simple, but really complicated, fireworks pictures. In the Gardens it

## JAMES McNEILL WHISTLER

was easy to put down what he wanted under the lamps. On the river, he had to trust almost entirely to his memory, sometimes only noting the reflections in white chalk.

At one time, master and pupils attended a life class held in the evening by M. Barthe, a Frenchman, in Limerston Street, not far from the Row. Mr. J. E. Christie, another student in the same class, writes us :

“ Whistler was not a regular attender at the Limerston Street Studio, but came occasionally, and always accompanied by two young men—brothers—Greaves by name. They let out rowing-boats on the Thames and Battersea Park. They simply adored Whistler, and were not unlike him in appearance, owing to an unconscious imitation of his dress and manner. It was amusing to watch the movements of the trio when they came into the studio (always late). The curtain that hung in front of the door would suddenly be pulled back by one of the Greaves, and a trim, prim little man, with a bright, merry eye, would step in with ‘ Good evening,’ cheerfully said to the whole studio. After a second’s survey, while taking off his gloves, he would hand his hat to the other brother, who hung it up carefully as if it were a sacred thing—then he would wipe his brow and moustache with a spotless handkerchief, then in the most careful way he arranged his materials, and sat down. Then, having imitated in a general way the preliminaries, the two Greaves sat down on either side of him. There was a sort of tacit understanding that his and their studies should not be subjected to the rude gaze of the general. I, however, saw, with the tail of my eye, as it were, that Whistler made small drawings on brown paper with coloured chalks, that the figure (always a female figure) would be about four inches long, that the drawing was bold and fine, and not slavishly like the model. The comical part was that his satellites didn’t draw from the model at all, that I saw, but sat looking at Whistler’s drawing and copying, as far as they could, that. He never entered into the conversation, which was unceasing, but occasionally rolled a cigarette and had a few whiffs, the Greaves brothers always requiring their whiffs at the same moment. The trio packed up, and left before the others always.”



LINDSEY ROW



NO. 7 LINDSEY ROW  
(First House)



NO. 2 LINDSEY ROW  
(Second House)



## CHELSEA DAYS

Sometimes, in the evening, Whistler, with his mother, would go to the Greaves' house after dinner, and work there. Often he sent in dessert, that they might enjoy and talk over it together. Then he would bring out his brown paper and chalks, and make studies of different members of the family, and of himself, or sketches of pictures he had seen, working until midnight and after. He told Mr. Way once that, in those days, he never went to bed until he had drawn a portrait of himself. Many of those portraits are in existence and one is here reproduced. The sister was an accomplished musician, and Whistler delighted in music, though he was not too critical, for he was known to call the passing hurdy-gurdy into his front garden, and have it ground under his windows. Occasionally, the brothers played, so that Whistler might dance. He was always full of drolleries and fun. He would imitate a man sawing, or two men fighting at the door, so cleverly that Mrs. Greaves never ceased to be astonished when he walked into the room alone and unhurt. He delighted in American mechanical toys, and his house was full of Japanese dolls. One great doll, dressed like a man, he would take with him, not only to the Greaves', but to dinners at Little Holland House, where the Prinseps then lived, and to other houses, where he put it through amazing performances.

Dante Gabriel Rossetti was, by this time, well settled at Tudor House (now Queen's House, the original name) not far from Lindsey Row, and Mr. Swinburne and Mr. George Meredith were living with him. Mr. W. M. Rossetti came for two or three nights every week, and Frederick Sandys, Charles Augustus Howell, William Bell Scott, and, several years later, Mr. Theodore Watts-Dunton were constant visitors.

For Rossetti, Whistler had a genuine affection. "A charming fellow, the only white man in all that crowd of  
1863]

## JAMES McNEILL WHISTLER

painters," we have heard him say again and again: "not an artist, you know, but charming, and a gentleman." Mr. Watts-Duntton says, on the other hand, that Rossetti got exceedingly tired of Whistler after a while, and considered him a brainless fellow, who had no more than a malicious quick wit at the expense of others, and no real philosophy or humour. But Whistler certainly never knew of any change in Rossetti's feelings towards him. Mr. Meredith writes us:

"I knew Whistler and never had a dissension with him, though merry bouts between us were frequent. When I went to live in the country, we rarely met. He came down to stay with me once. He was a lively companion, never going out of his way to take offence, but with the springs in him prompt for the challenge. His tales of his student life in Paris, and of one Ernest, with whom he set forth on a holiday journey with next to nothing in the purse, were *impayable*."

It was inevitable that Whistler and Rossetti should disagree in matters of art. Whistler asked Rossetti why he did not frame his sonnets. Rossetti thought that "the new French School," in which Whistler had been trained, was "simple putrescence and decomposition." It is said that Rossetti influenced Whistler. Whistler influenced him just as much. They influenced each other in the choice of models, in a certain luxuriance of type and the manner of presenting it, an influence which was wholly superficial and transitory.

Upon many other subjects they did agree. Rossetti shared Whistler's delight in drollery and his love of the fantastic. No one understood better than Whistler why Rossetti filled his house and garden with strange beasts. It was from Whistler we heard of the peacock and the gazelle, who fought until the peacock was left standing desolate with his tail apart upon the ground; the origin, we have always believed, of the monkey and the parrot story. From Whistler, too, we had the story of the bull—the bull of Bashan—bought at Cremorne, and tied to a stake in the garden, where Rossetti

## CHELSEA DAYS

would come every day and talk to him, until once the bull was so excited by this talk that he pulled up the stake and made for Rossetti, who went tearing round and round a tree, a little fat person with coat-tails flying, finally, by a supreme effort, rushing up the garden steps just in time to slam the door in the bull's face. Rossetti called his man and ordered him to tie up the bull, but he, who had looked out for the menagerie, who had gone about the house with peacocks and other creatures under his arms, who had rescued armadillos from irate neighbours, who had captured monkeys from the tops of chimneys, struck when it came to tying up a bull of Bashan on the rampage, and gave a month's warning. From Whistler also, we first had the story of the wombat, bought at Jamrack's by Rossetti for the sake of its name. Whistler was dining at Tudor House, and the wombat was brought on the table with coffee and cigars. It was an amazing evening, Meredith talking with, if possible, more than his usual brilliancy, and Swinburne reading aloud passages from the *Leaves of Grass*. But Meredith was witty as well as brilliant, and the special target of his wit was Rossetti, who, as he had invited two or three of his patrons, did not appreciate the jest. The evening ended less amiably than it had begun, and no one thought of the wombat until a late hour, and then it had disappeared. It was searched for high and low. Days passed, weeks passed, months passed, and there was no wombat. It was regretted, forgotten. Long afterwards, Rossetti, who was not much of a smoker, got out the box of cigars he had not touched since that dinner. He opened it. Not a cigar was left, but there was the skeleton of the wombat.

Whistler and Rossetti also agreed about many of the group who met at Tudor House, though Whistler acutely felt what appeared to him the disloyalty shown at a later time by Swinburne and Burne-Jones. He was never, at any

1863]

## JAMES MCNEILL WHISTLER

time so intimate with Burne-Jones as with Swinburne, who often came to the house in Lindsey Row, not only for Whistler's sake, but out of affection for Whistler's mother. Miss Chapman tells us that Swinburne was once taken ill there suddenly, and Mrs. Whistler nursed him until he was well. Miss Chapman also remembers Swinburne sitting at Mrs. Whistler's feet, and saying to her: "Mrs. Whistler, what has happened? It used to be Algernon!" Mrs. Whistler, though always the Puritan of old, had accepted Whistler's friends and their ways in a surprisingly short time, and said quietly, "You have not been to see us for a long while, you know. If you come as you did, it will be Algernon again." And he came, and the cordiality of their relations lasted until the 'eighties when he published the article in the *Fortnightly Review* which Whistler could not forgive.

Quarrels and distrust could never make Whistler deny the charm of Charles Augustus Howell, a remarkable man, who will always be remembered for the part he played in the lives of some of the most distinguished people of his generation. Who he was, where he came from, his friends do not seem to have known. He was supposed to be mysteriously associated with high, but nameless, personages in Portugal, and sent by them on a secret mission to England; he was said to have been involved in the Orsini conspiracy, and obliged to fly for his life across the Channel. The unquestionable fact is that he was a man of unusual personal charm and business capacity. Mr. W. M. Rossetti has written of him:

"As a salesman—with his open manner, winning address, and his exhaustless gift of amusing talk, not innocent of high colouring and of actual *blague*—Howell was unsurpassable."

He was, for a time, secretary to Ruskin; he was Rossetti's man of affairs; he became Whistler's, though on a less definite basis. He appears in published reminiscences of



THE WHITE GIRL  
(*Symphony in White, No. 1*)



## CHELSEA DAYS

him as the magnificent prototype of the author's agent of to-day. His talk was one of his recommendations to both Rossetti and Whistler. Rossetti always rejoiced in Howell's "Niagara of lies," and immortalised them in the following limerick:

"There's a Portuguese person called Howell,  
Who lays on his lies with a trowel;  
When I goggle my eyes,  
And start with surprise,  
'Tis at the monstrous big lies told by Howell."

Howell had just the qualities to enchant Whistler, who described him as

"The wonderful man, the genius, the Gil Blas-Robinson Crusoe hero out of his proper time, the creature of top-boots and plumes, splendidly flamboyant, the real hero of the Picaresque novel, forced by modern conditions into other adventures, and along other roads."

There is something of the creature of top-boots and plumes in Dunn's sketch of Howell in a letter to D. G. Rossetti lent to us by his brother. Whistler gave Howell credit for more than picturesqueness. He had the instinct for beautiful things, Whistler said:

"He knew them and made himself indispensable by knowing them. He was of the greatest service to Rossetti—he helped Watts to sell his pictures and raise the prices—he acted as artistic adviser to Mr. Howard, now Lord Carlisle. He had the gift of intimacy—he was at once a friend, on closest terms of confidence. He introduced everybody to everybody else, he entangled everybody with everybody else, and it was easier to get involved with Howell than to get rid of him."

Many years passed before there was any wish on Whistler's part to get rid of him. He was soon as frequent a visitor at Lindsey Row as at Tudor House. When he lived at Putney Whistler used to take his morning pull up the river to breakfast with him. Of none of his friends in those early Chelsea

## JAMES McNEILL WHISTLER

days did Whistler so often talk to us as of Howell, telling us, one after another, the adventures of this modern rival of Gil Blas and Pablo of Segovia : adventures in pursuit of old furniture and china until he was known to, and loved and hated by, every pawnbroker in London, until he seemed to spend all his time in cabs filled with rare and beautiful things ; adventures with creditors and bailiffs, one in especial, when his collection of blue pots was saved by a device only Howell could have invented, forty blue pots carried off in forty four-wheelers ; adventures in the law-courts, where he was complimented by the judge and awarded heavy damages by the jury for nothing in particular ; adventures as vestryman, giving teas to hundreds of school children ; adventures at Selsea Bill, where three cottages were turned into a house for himself and he swaggered in the village as a great personage, finding an occupation in stripping the copper from an old wreck that had been there for years, but never touched before ; adventures ending eventually in the *Paddon Papers*, of which there will be something to say when the date of their publication is reached.

For Sandys, Whistler had a real, if humorous, affection, though the two lost sight of each other during many years. Sandys' work never interested Whistler, but Sandys, the man, was a perpetual delight to him as the English counterpart of his friends of the Latin Quarter. Like them, Sandys was usually without a penny in his pocket, and, like them, he faced the situation with calm and swagger, but he added a magnificence they never, in their maddest moments, pretended to. Accidents never separated him from his white waistcoat, though he might have to carry it himself to the laundry, or get his model, "the little girl," he called her, to carry it for him. You were always meeting them with the brown paper parcel, Whistler said, and at the nearest friend's house he would stop, and five minutes later come

## CHELSEA DAYS

out splendid in another immaculate white waistcoat. In money matters he reckoned like a Rothschild. It was always : " Huh ! five hundred," that he wanted. Late one afternoon, as Whistler was going to Rossetti's, he met Sandys looking unusually depressed. He stopped Whistler :

" Do, do try and reason with Gabriel, huh ! He is most thoughtless. He says I must go to America, and I must have five hundred, huh ! and go ! But, if I could go, huh ! I could stay ! "

Whistler got to know others among Rossetti's friends, drifting, with many artists, to Madox Brown's evenings in Fitzroy Square :

" Once in a long while, I would take my gaiety, my sunniness, to Madox Brown's receptions. And there were always the most wonderful people—the Blinds, Swinburne, anarchists, poets and musicians, all kinds and sorts, and, in an inner room, Rossetti and Mrs. Morris sitting side by side in state, being worshipped, and, fluttering round them, Howell with a broad red ribbon across his shirt front, a Portuguese decoration hereditary in the family."

Whistler also shared Rossetti's interest in spirits and the manifestations that, during several years, agitated the little circle at Tudor House. He told us once of the strange things that happened when he went to *séances* at Rossetti's with " Joe," and also when he and " Joe " tried the same experiments in his studio. Once, a cousin from the South, long since dead, talked to him, and told him much that no one else could have known. He believed, but he gave up all such practices when they threatened to become too engrossing, for he felt that he would be obliged to sacrifice to them the real work he had to do in this world.

Nothing, however, brought Whistler and Rossetti into closer sympathy than their love for blue and white china, Japanese prints, and Japanese design. Whistler was in Paris in 1856, when Bracquemond " discovered " Japan in a little  
1863]

## JAMES McNEILL WHISTLER

volume of Hokusai, used for packing china, and rescued by Delâtre, the printer. It passed into the hands of Laveille, the engraver, and from him Bracquemond obtained it. After that, Bracquemond had the book always with him, showing it to everybody, talking about it to everybody; and when, in 1862, Madame Desoye, who, with her husband, had lived in Japan, opened her Oriental shop under the arcades of the Rue de Rivoli, the enthusiasm spread at once to Manet, Fantin, Tissot, Jacquemart and Solon. Baudelaire and the De Goncourts were as ardent. In England, Japanese and Chinese art, at a much earlier period, had been known and appreciated, but only by the few. Rossetti was for long supposed to have made it the fashion with the many. But the excitement in Paris had begun before Rossetti owned his first blue pot or his first Japanese colour-print. Whistler brought the knowledge and his love for the art of Japan with him to London. "It was he who invented blue and white in London," Mr. Murray Marks assures us, and Mr. W. M. Rossetti is as certain that his brother was inspired by Whistler, who bought not only blue and white, but sketch-books, colour-prints, lacquers, kakemonos, embroideries, screens. "In his own house in Chelsea, facing Battersea Bridge," Mr. Severn writes, "he had lovely blue and white, Chinese and Japanese." The only decorations, except the simple harmony of colour everywhere, were the prints on the walls, a flight of Japanese fans in one place, in another shelves of blue and white. People, afterwards, copying him unintelligently, stuck up fans anywhere, and hung plates from wires as ornaments. Whistler's fans were arranged for a beautiful effect of colour and line. His decorations bewildered people even more than the work of the then new firm of Morris, Marshall, Faulkner and Co. The popular Victorian artist covered his walls with tapestry, filled his studio with costly things, and taught the public to measure



ONE OF THE BOARD  
(Caricature made at *West Point*)  
(Pen and Pencil)



WEST POINT DRAWING  
(Wash)



## CHELSEA DAYS

beauty by its price, a fact overlooked by Whistler, though not by the decorators in Red Lion Square.

Rossetti threw himself into the pursuit of blue and white with his usual impetuosity. Henry Treffly Dunn, in his *Recollections of Rossetti*, whose assistant he was, writes that Rossetti and Whistler "each tried to outwit the other in picking up the choicest pieces of blue to be met with"; that both were for ever hunting for "Long Elizas," a name in which, Mr. W. M. Rossetti thinks, "possibly a witticism of Whistler's may be detected." Howell joined in the pursuit, and, as we should know without Dunn's assurance, met with the "most astounding experiences and adventures." A little shop in the Strand was one of their favourite haunts, another was near London Bridge, where a Japanese print was given away with a pound of tea. Farmer and Rogers had an Oriental Warehouse in Regent Street. The firm has long been dissolved, but the manager was Mr. Lazenby Liberty, who afterwards opened his own shop on the other side of Regent Street, and here, too, Whistler went, introduced to Mr. Liberty by Rossetti. Mr. Liberty rendered him many a service, and visited him to the last. Mr. Murray Marks also imported blue and white, and he has told us how the fever spread from Whistler and Rossetti to the ordinary collector. Rossetti asked Mr. Marks one day if he knew anything about blue and white. Mr. Marks said, yes; he could get Rossetti all he wanted, a ship-load if he chose. Mr. Marks often ran over to Holland where blue and white was quite common and still cheap, and he picked up a lot of it, offering it to Rossetti for fifty pounds. Rossetti happened to be hard up at the time, and could not afford the price. But he came with Mr. Huth, who bought all that Rossetti could not take, and the rage for it began in England, Sir Henry Thompson, among others, commencing to collect. The rivalry between Whistler and Rossetti lasted 1863]

## JAMES McNEILL WHISTLER

for several years, until Rossetti, ill and broken, hardly saw his friends, and until Mr. Marks, in the early 'seventies, bought back from Whistler and Rossetti all he had sold them.

We cannot better finish the story of Whistler's relations with the group at Tudor House than by giving the impression left on one of them, whom Whistler always liked. Mr. W. M. Rossetti, in November 1906, wrote specially for us an account of his acquaintance with Whistler, and, though it goes beyond this period, we quote it all here, as his estimate of Whistler was formed during these early years.

"From this time [1862] onward, up to 1871 or 1872, we saw Whistler continually, and on the most intimate footing. It may, I dare say, have happened now and again that Dante Rossetti saw him every day for a fortnight or so together—Whistler being in his house, or he, rather seldomer, in Whistler's; and the same would be true of myself, but for the fact that I did not spend the whole week, but only three days out of the seven, in the Cheyne Walk house. Whistler was, as every one knows, a most amusing talker and pleasant companion—full of good-humoured and genial *camaraderie*; and, so far as my brother and I are concerned, he took everything as it came, and never exhibited any short temper or readiness at taking offence. We knew, through him, his brother, Dr. Whistler, and his mother, Alphonse Legros, and perhaps some members of the Greek community in London, such as the Ionides family. There were various other persons known to Whistler, whom we also knew independently of him.

"It was through Whistler that my brother and I became acquainted with Japanese woodcuts and colour-prints. This may have been early in 1863. He had seen and purchased some specimens of those works in Paris, and he heartily delighted in them, and showed them to us; and we then set about procuring other works of the same class. I hardly know that any one in London had paid any attention to Japanese designs prior to this.

"After leaving Queen's Road, Whistler was in three other houses, all in the Chelsea district; the last was the White House in Tite Street. I knew him in all these residences; but my brother, I fancy, was not ever in the White House.

## CHELSEA DAYS

"Thus things went on between us, always to our mutual satisfaction, until the summer of 1872, when my brother had a severe illness, and then, up to the summer of 1874, he lived out of London—first in Scotland, and afterwards at Kelmscott, Oxfordshire. After returning to London, he saw, I think, very little of Whistler; the chief reason being that he had then adopted a habit of not going about to see any one, and even in his own house he kept very much to a restricted circle of intimate friends. I never heard that any dissension had arisen between the two, but they ceased to be in the way of meeting. I myself continued seeing Whistler pretty frequently; but, having married in 1874, I was then much less among old bachelor friends than I had previously been. He was occasionally in our house, and I in his, up to the date, say 1879, when he left London after the Ruskin libel action.

"After the trial in the Ruskin action had taken place, with its very disputable verdict, Whistler lived abroad for a while. I saw him, with the same cordiality as of old, once after he had returned to London from Venice; and this, it appears to me, was the last time.

"Whistler is known to the world, by direct evidence and by rumour, principally in three characters: (1) As a painter and etcher, &c.; (2) as a wit and humorist; (3) as a man of a pugnacious or litigious turn. I will say a few words on each of these three points, sufficient for expressing my own opinion, which is all that I have to do with.

"(1) People have found out, by this time, however their predecessors may have doubted it, that Whistler was in many respects a most admirable artist and master—an initiator and leader, incomparable from his own point of view. That there was a certain element of whimsicality in his art, as in his mind and character generally, appears to be true. One is not bound to assume that all his productions are blemishless, nor that a portrait of a woman is most efficiently defined as 'an arrangement in pearl and green.'

"(2) As a wit and humorist Whistler certainly excelled all the other artists I have known, and, with an exception here and there, all the men of whatsoever class. His wit and humour consisted partly of general sprightliness, and partly of a natural gift for epigram and repartee. All came with a spontaneous, impromptu air. There are some people whom he scorned, and

## JAMES McNEILL WHISTLER

to them he would say sharp things which they would not have liked to hear ; but, broadly speaking, his sallies were not of an ill-natured kind.

“(3) Whistler’s pugnacious or litigious turn gave rise every now and then to acts which I decidedly did not approve—neither did my brother. I shall not enter into any details, for this is not my affair. In general terms, it may be said that Whistler in such matters had the feelings of an American or a Frenchman, much rather than of an Englishman. He had a touchy sense of self-regard, or indeed of self-assertion, and was not inclined to yield an inch to any gainsayer. His *Gentle Art of Making Enemies* gives a very speaking picture of his mind in this respect ; and, after making all fair allowances contrariwise, I think it may be truly said that, in the various controversies embalmed in this diverting book, Whistler was essentially in the right in almost every instance.”

On Post in Camp



On Post in Camp



First Half Hour

Second Half hour

On Post in Camp

On Post in Camp



Third half hour

Last half hour!

ON POST IN CAMP  
HOURS IN THE LIFE OF A CADET  
(Pen and Ink)



## CHAPTER XI. CHELSEA DAYS. THE YEARS EIGHTEEN SIXTY-THREE TO EIGHTEEN SIXTY-SIX CONTINUED

IN Whistler's correspondence with Fantin, which was most active between 1860 and 1865, it can be seen how completely he was outgrowing the influence of Courbet, and how bitter he was in his reaction against Realism. In his first revolt he went to the other extreme. He deliberately built up subjects for himself that had nothing to do with life as he knew it, and the motives for these he borrowed from Japan.

It was in the studio at No. 7 Lindsey Row, no huge, gorgeous, tapestry-hung, *bric-à-brac* crowded hall, but a modest little second story, or English first floor, back room, that the Japanese pictures were painted. The method was still that of his earlier work, the paint thickly laid on, with the richness he later sacrificed to other and more subtle qualities. The difference was in his subjects. He did not endeavour to conceal his "machinery." The *Lange Leizen*, *The Gold Screen*, *The Balcony*, the *Princesse du Pays de la Porcelaine* were so many excuses for him to render a beauty foreign to Western life and English atmosphere. There was no attempt at the learned accuracy of Tadema and Leighton in their classical compositions, or of Holman Hunt in his scriptural records. Whistler's models were frankly not Japanese. The lady in the *Lange Leizen*—of the *Six Marks* sits on a chair as she never would have sat in the land from which her draperies came, and the pots and trays

1865]

## JAMES McNEILL WHISTLER

and flowers around her are in a profusion unknown in the houses of Tokio or Canton. In *The Gold Screen*, pose and arrangement are equally inappropriate. The *Princesse*, in her trailing robes, is as little Japanese or Chinese as she is English. Once, when he left the studio and took his canvas to the front of the house and painted *The Balcony*, though he clothed the English models in Eastern dress and gave them Eastern instruments to play, placed them before Japanese screens and Anglo-Japanese railings, their background was the Thames with the chimneys of Battersea. These things did not matter to Whistler. It was not Japan he wanted to paint, but the beautiful colour and form of Japanese detail, as the titles he afterwards found for the pictures explain : *Purple and Rose, Caprice in Purple and Gold, Harmony in Flesh Colour and Green, Rose and Silver*. Harmony was what he sought, though no Dutchman ever surpassed their delicacy of detail, truth of texture, intricacy of pattern. And yet we are always conscious in them of the artificial structure as in none of his other work ; the models do not live in their Japanese draperies ; Eastern lutes and hangings are out of place on the mist-laden banks of the Thames ; the device is too obvious.

The *Princesse du Pays de la Porcelaine* is the portrait of Miss Christine Spartali, daughter of the Consul-General for Greece in London, whom Whistler met at Mr. Ionides' house, and to whose dinners and parties he often went. There were two daughters, Christine (afterwards the Countess Edmond de Cahen) and Marie (Mrs. W. J. Stillman), both very beautiful, with a beauty as foreign to England as the colour of Japanese stuffs, and the conventions of Japanese artists. Whistler, no less than Rossetti, was struck by their beauty, and asked the younger sister, Christine, to sit to him. Mrs. Stillman, who always accompanied her for the sittings, has told us the story of the picture. The first



THE LANGE LEIZEN—OF THE SIX MARKS  
(*Purple and Rose*)



## CHELSEA DAYS

day, when they arrived in the studio, Whistler had his scheme prepared. The Japanese robe was ready, the rug and screen were in place, and he gave the pose at once. There are a number of small studies and sketches in oil and pastel that show how he had perfected the idea beforehand. They used to come to him twice a week, and this continued through the winter of 1863-64. At first the work went quickly, but soon it began to drag. Whistler often scraped down the figure just as they thought it all but finished, and day after day they returned to find that everything was to be done over again. Their parents got tired of it in the end, but not the two girls, who shared Whistler's enthusiasm. Mrs. Stillman remembers that Whistler partly closed the shutters so as to shut out the direct light; that her sister stood at one end of the room, the canvas beside her; that Whistler would look at the picture from a distance, then suddenly dash at it, give one stroke, then dash away again. She remembers too that, as a rule, they arrived about half-past ten or a quarter to eleven, that he painted steadily, forgetting everything else, that it was often long after two before they lunched. When lunch at last was served, it was brought into the studio, placed on a low table, and they sat on stools. There were no such lunches anywhere else. Mrs. Whistler provided American dishes, then strange in London; among other things raw tomatoes, a surprise to the two Greek girls, who had never eaten tomatoes except overcooked, as the Greeks like them, and canned apricots and cream, which they had never eaten at all. One *menu* in particular Mrs. Whistler often provided was roast pheasants, followed by the inevitable tomato salad, and the apricots and cream, usually with champagne. One cannot wonder that there were occasional deficits in the bank account at Lindsey Row. But it was not merely the things to eat and drink that made the hour a delight. Whistler, silent when he worked, was

1864]

## JAMES McNEILL WHISTLER

gay at lunch. Perhaps better than his charm, Mrs. Stillman remembers his devotion to his mother, who was calm and dignified, with something of the sweet peacefulness of the Friends. After lunch work was renewed, and it was four and later before they were released.

The sittings went on until the sitter fell ill. Whistler was pitiless with his models. The head in the *Princesse* gave him most trouble. He kept Miss Spartali standing while he worked on it, never letting her rest ; she must keep the entire pose, and she would not admit her fatigue as long as she could help it. During her illness, a model stood for the gown, and when she was getting better, he came one day and made a pencil-drawing of her head, though where it went Mrs. Stillman never knew. There were a few more sittings after this, and at last the picture was finished. The two girls wanted their father to buy it, but Mr. Spartali did not like it. He objected to it as a portrait of his daughter. Appreciation of art was not among the virtues of the London Greeks. Mr. Alexander Ionides and his sons were almost alone in preferring a good thing to a bad one.

Rossetti, always glad to be of service to a friend, sold the picture for Whistler, though this was no easy matter. Whistler agreed to take a hundred pounds, and Rossetti placed the canvas in his own studio, where it would be seen by a rich collector who was coming to look at his work. The collector came, saw the *Princesse*, liked it, wanted it. There was one objection : Whistler's signature in big letters across the canvas. If Whistler would change the signature he would take the picture. Rossetti, enchanted, hurried to tell Whistler. But Whistler was indignant. The request showed what manner of man such a patron was, one in whose possession he did not care to have any work of his, and that was the end of the bargain. However, Rossetti did sell the *Princesse* to another collector, who died shortly afterwards, when it was

## CHELSEA DAYS

bought by Frederick Leyland, and so led to the decoration of the Peacock Room, one of Whistler's most splendid works.

It is quite possible that the objection of Rossetti's collector to the *Princesse* made Whistler realise the discordant effect of a large signature on a picture. It is sure that, about this time, he began to arrange his initials somewhat after the Japanese fashion, and they first appear interlaced in an oblong or circular frame exactly like the signatures of Japanese artists on colour prints. He signed his name to the earliest pictures, even to some of the Japanese. But with the Nocturnes and the large portraits the Butterfly begins, made from working the letters J. M. W. into a design, which became more fantastic until it finally evolved into the Butterfly in silhouette, and continued, in various forms. In the *Carlyle*, the Butterfly appears in a round frame, like a cut-out silhouette, behind the figure, and repeats the prints on the wall. In the *Miss Alexander* it is in a large semicircle and is far more distinctly a butterfly. In time, however, it grew like a stencil, though in no sense was it one, as may be seen in M. Duret's portrait, where the Butterfly is made simply in silhouette, on the background, by a few touches of the rose of the opera cloak and the fan. It was introduced as a note of colour, as important in the picture as anything else, and at times it was put in almost at the first painting to judge the effect, scraped out with the whole thing, put in again somewhere else, this repeated again and again until he got it right. We have seen many an unfinished picture with the most wonderfully finished Butterfly, because it was just where Whistler wanted it.

The same development can be traced in his etchings, in which it began to appear as a bit of decoration. He originally signed the prints, and signed the plates with his name and date bitten in. But later on the prints were signed with the Butterfly, followed by "*imp*" while the Butterfly alone was

## JAMES McNEILL WHISTLER

etched on the copper or drawn on the stone. He began to add the Butterfly to the signature to letters and to dedications on prints. Then the Butterfly found its way to his invitation cards, and so it went on, until, at last, his correspondence, public and private, was usually signed with the Butterfly alone. This was elaborated in the most ingenious manner in *The Gentle Art of Making Enemies*, the Butterfly not only decorating, but actually punctuating the pages.

On the frames of many of the early pictures, Japanese patterns, which always haunted him, were painted in red or blue on the flat gold, and a Butterfly placed on them, always in relation to the picture. He designed the frames, and they were carried out by the Greaves in the beginning, while later, shortly before his death, a few were done by his stepson, E. Godwin. The *Sarasate*, in Pittsburg, is an excellent example of one of these frames; the *Battersea Bridge*, at the Tate Gallery, is another.\* Whistler used a similar scheme in framing his etchings, water-colours, and pastels, reddish lines, and at times the Butterfly, appearing on the white or gold of the frames. In after years, he not only ceased almost entirely to use these painted frames, but he designed a simple gold frame, with parallel reeded lines on the outer edge, for the paintings, now universally known as "the Whistler frame." For his etchings and lithographs also, he gave up the decoration and employed a plain white frame in two planes. His canvases and his panels were always of the same sizes; consequently they always fitted his frames. And in his studio, as in few, if any, others, frequently there might be half a hundred canvases with their faces to the wall, and only half a dozen frames. But they all fitted, and Whistler never showed a picture unframed. All this was the outcome of the Japanese influence, and of his knowledge of the way the Japanese display their

\* *Variations in Violet and Green*, reproduced page 156, is a third.

## CHELSEA DAYS

art. His deference to Japanese convention went so far that he often put a branch of a tree or a reed into the foreground of his seas and rivers as decoration, with no reference to the picture, sometimes the only Japanese suggestion in the design.

The *Lange Leizen*—of the *Six Marks* went to the Academy of 1864, and so did the *Wapping*. The Japanese subject seemed “quaint” to the critic of the *Athenæum*, and the drawing “preposterously incorrect,” but he could not deny the “superb colouring,” the “beautiful harmonies”; while in *Wapping* he saw an “incomparable view of the Lower Pool of London.” “Never before was that familiar scene so triumphantly well painted,” Mr. W. M. Rossetti wrote, and he considered Whistler’s

“on the whole, the most thoroughly satisfying works in the Academic gallery to the artistic sense. His is the art of concealing art, yet always with so fine an originality that to the perceptive eye the art is the one main and supreme constituent of the whole, the sum of its total result. He realises, through Nature for the sake of art, an aim as legitimate as the more usual one of realising through art for the sake of Nature, and even more intrinsically pictorial.”

He was now working out of the frankly artificial scheme of the Japanese pictures to a phase in which he was more himself than he had ever been before. A year after the exhibition of the *Lange Leizen*, he sent to the Academy of 1865 the most individual, the most complete, the most perfect picture he ever painted at any period: *The Little White Girl*, which artists, with reason, rank as one of the few great pictures of the world. It was dated 1864 originally and there are reproductions showing the date. But about 1900 he painted it out. He had been working on the picture he told us, and “did not see the use of those great figures sprawling there.” “Joe” was the model. Now, there was no masquerading in foreign finery. Whistler painted her, as he must often have seen her, in her simple white

1865]

## JAMES MCNEILL WHISTLER

gown, leaning against the mantel, her beautiful face reflected in the mirror. The room was not littered purposely with his purchases from the little shops in the Strand and the Rue de Rivoli. Japan is in the detail of blue and white on the mantel ; the girl holds a Japanese fan ; a spray of azalea trails across her dress. But these were part of Whistler's house, part of the reality he had created for himself, and he made them no more beautiful than the mantel, the grate of the English house, than the reflection in the mirror. There was no building up, he painted what he saw. The things actually near and around him were lovelier than any studio arrangement. And there was in the method the beginning of change. The paint is thinner on the canvas, the brush flows more freely. Method and design alike give the repose of the perfect work. *The Little White Girl* is now owned by Mr. Arthur Studd.

The picture had not gone to the Academy when Swinburne saw it, and wrote *Before the Mirror : Verses under a Picture*. The poem was printed on gold paper, pasted on to the frame, which has disappeared, and two verses were inserted in the catalogue as sub-title. These must have been the lines Whistler thought best interpreted the beauty he meant to express :

Come snow, come wind or thunder,  
High up in air,  
I watch my face, and wonder  
At my bright hair ;  
Naught else exalts or grieves  
The rose at heart, that heaves  
With love of her own leaves and lips that pair.  
.  
.  
.  
I cannot see what pleasures  
Or what pains were ;  
What pale new loves and treasures  
New years will bear ;  
What beam will fall, what shower,  
What grief or joy for dower ;  
But one thing knows the flower—the flower is fair,

## CHELSEA DAYS

Other lines show as well how sympathetically Swinburne felt the beauty of the picture :

White rose in red rose-garden  
Is not so white ;—

and again in the verse where he calls *The Little White Girl* “ White sister ” :

My hand, a fallen rose,  
Lies snow-white on white snows, and takes no care.

Swinburne's poem could not make *The Little White Girl* at the Academy better understood than *The White Girl* had been in Berners Street. The rare few could appreciate its “ charm ” and “ exquisiteness ” with Mr. W. M. Rossetti, who found that it was “ crucially tested by its proximity to the flashing white in Mr. Millais' *Esther*,” but that it stood the test, “ retorting delicious harmony for daring force, and would shame any other contrast.” But the more general opinion was all the other way. The *Athenæum* distinguished itself by regretting this year that Whistler should make the “ most ‘ bizarre ’ of bipeds ” out of the women he painted. There was praise for two of his other three pictures. “ Subtle beauty of colour ” and “ almost mystical delicacy of tone ” were discovered in *The Gold Screen*, and “ colour such as painters love ” in the *Old Battersea Bridge*, afterwards *Brown and Silver*. This is the beautiful grey Battersea, with the touch of red in the roofs of the opposite shore, the link between the early paintings on the river and the Nocturnes that were to follow. *The Scarf*, a picture we do not recognise, attracted less attention, and Whistler, who, only the year before, had been declared “ one of the most original artists of the day,” was now dismissed as one who “ might be called half a great artist.” But stranger than this was the change in the attitude of the French critics, which we cannot account for. In 1863, they overwhelmed him with praise. Two years later, they had hardly a good word to

1865]

say for him. Lévi Lagrange, now forgotten as he merits, wrote the criticism of the Royal Academy of 1865 for the *Gazette des Beaux-Arts*, and all he could see in *The Little White Girl* was a weak repetition of *The White Girl*, a wearisome variation of the theme of white; really, he said, it was quite witty—*fort spirituel*—of the Academicians, who could have refused this and the two Japanese pictures, to give them good places, and so deliver them over to judgment. And then he praised Horseley and Prinsep, Leslie and Landseer. The *Princesse du Pays de la Porcelaine*, exhibited in the Salon, made no more favourable impression. It seemed nothing but a study of costume to Paul Mantz, who, in the *Gazette des Beaux-Arts*, decided to forget it and remember merely the mysterious seduction of *The White Girl* of two years before. Its eccentricity was only possible if taken in small doses like the homœopathist's pills, according to Jules Claretie, who in the same article, in *L'Artiste*, laughed at Manet's *Olympia* as a jest, a parody. More than twenty years were to pass before, in Paris, praise of Whistler came into vogue again.

Whistler's only other appearance at the Salon this year was in Fantin's *Hommage à la Vérité*, one of the two large groups including Whistler's portrait which Fantin painted. The other, done the year before, was the *Hommage à Delacroix*, who had died in 1863. Whistler was among the several admirers whom Fantin represented, gathered round the portrait of the dead master. Whistler wanted Fantin to find a place for Rossetti, and Fantin was willing, but Rossetti could not manage to get to Paris, or to stay there, for the necessary sittings, and unfortunately for him he was left out of one of the most celebrated portrait groups of modern times, now in the Moreau-Nélaton Collection in the Louvre. The distinguished artists and men of letters in the group were there nominally



Cordier  
Duranty

Legros

Fantin-Latour

Whistler

Champfleury

Manet

Braque  
Baudelaire

De Ballery

# HOMMAGE À DELACROIX

(From the picture by Fantin-Latour. Salon, 1864)



## CHELSEA DAYS

out of respect to the memory of Delacroix, but really to enable Fantin to justify his belief in the beauty of life as it is, and his protest against the classical dictionary and studio properties. Most of the men in the group were, or have since become, famous: Whistler, Manet, Legros, Bracquemond, Fantin, Baudelaire, Duranty, Champfleury, Cordier, De Balleroy. Fantin painted them in the costume of the moment, as Rembrandt and Hals and Van der Helst, from whom he is said to have got the idea, painted the regents and archers of seventeenth-century Holland. Fantin's white shirt is the one concession to picturesqueness, and the one relief to the severity of detail are the flowers on the table in front of Whistler, a lithe, erect, youthful figure, with fine keen face and abundant hair. That the young American should be the centre of the group was a distinction he could better appreciate than any one. When Rossetti saw the picture, he wrote to his brother that it had "a great deal of very able painting in parts, but it is a great slovenly scrawl after all, like the rest of this incredible new school." The picture was shown in the Salon of 1864, followed in 1865 by the *Hommage à la Vérité,—le Toast*.

In this, Fantin strayed so far from the Real as to introduce an allegorical figure of Truth, and to allow Whistler to array himself in a gorgeous Chinese robe. "*Pense à la robe, superbe à faire, et donne la moi!*" Whistler urged from London, and Fantin yielded. "*Je l'ai encore revu dans l'atelier en 1865, il me posa dans un tableau aujourd'hui détruit 'Le Toast,' ou il était costumé d'une robe Japonaise,*" is Fantin's story of it in the notes which we have already quoted, but Whistler, writing at the time, speaks of the costume as Chinese. He brought it over to Paris for the sittings. Fantin was quick to regret his concessions. An allegorical figure could not be made real, the whole thing was absurd. When he got the canvas back, he destroyed it, all but the 1865]

## JAMES McNEILL WHISTLER

portraits of Whistler, Villon and himself. Whistler's is now in the New York Public Library, the gift of Mr. Avery.

In the spring of 1865 Whistler was joined in London by his younger brother. Dr. Whistler had distinguished himself in the Confederate Army as surgeon, and by his bravery in the field. He had served in the Richmond Hospitals and in Libby Prison ; he had been assistant-surgeon at Drewry's Bluff, and, in 1864, when Grant made his movement against Richmond, he had been assigned to Orr's Rifles, a celebrated South Carolina regiment. In the early winter of 1865, a few months' furlough was given him, and he was entrusted by the Government in Richmond with important despatches for Liverpool. Sherman's advance prevented his running the blockade from Charleston, nor was there any passing through the lines from Wilmington by sea. He was obliged to go north through Maryland, which meant making his way round Grant's lines. The difficulties and dangers were endless. He had to get rid of his Confederate uniform, and in the state of Confederate finance, the most modest suit of clothes cost fourteen hundred dollars ; for a seat in an ambulance or waggon he had to pay five hundred. The trains were crowded by officials and soldiers, and he could get a ride in them only by stealth. The roads were abominable, for driving, or riding, or walking. Often he was alone, and his one companion, toward the last, was more of a hindrance than a help. This was a fellow soldier who had lost a leg at Antietam, and was now trying to get to Philadelphia for repairs to an artificial leg, manufactured there and grown rusty. Stanton's expedition filled the country near the Rappahannock with snares and pitfalls ; to cross Chesapeake Bay was to take one's life in one's hands ; and north of the Bay were the enrolling officers of the Union, in search of conscripts. However, Philadelphia was at last reached, and a ticket for New York bought at the railroad depôt,

## CHELSEA DAYS

where two sentries, with bayonets fixed, guarded the ticket-office, and might, for all Dr. Whistler knew, have seen him in Libby Prison. This, he said, was the worst moment of all. In New York he took passage on the *City of Manchester* and from Liverpool he hurried to London. One week later came the news of the fall of Richmond and the Confederacy. The furlough was over. There was no going back. It was probably about this time, from the costume and the technical resemblance to Mr. Luke Ionides' portrait that Whistler painted a very interesting head of Dr. Whistler—*Portrait of My Brother*—owned by Mrs. Dr. Whistler. It is carried out in the same solid fashion that characterises the other portraits of the period.

With the end of the war, many other Southern men who could not return home drifted into London and to the house in Lindsey Row. Adventure was in the air, was before long to send Whistler in search of it himself.

Early in September of 1865, Whistler's mother was suffering from serious trouble with her eyes, and went with her two sons to Coblenz, to be under the care of a celebrated oculist. This gave Whistler an opportunity to go again over the ground of the Rhine journey. After that, he spent some time at Trouville, where he was joined by Courbet, who had come for his first look at the sea and was so impressed that he stayed on. Whistler's work shows how far he had drifted away from Courbet, though the two were always the best of friends. But Whistler had ceased to be the pupil. He had studied, and experimented, and solved problems for himself, since Courbet praised his *Piano Picture*, since he painted his *Coast of Brittany* with its Courbet-like rocks along the shore, and his *Blue Wave* breaking with Courbet-like force on the sands at Biarritz. In *Sea and Rain*, done then at Trouville, there is not a suggestion of Courbet. But we have seen seas by Courbet, owned by M. Duret, that  
1865]

## JAMES McNEILL WHISTLER

Whistler might have signed. "Joe" was there, too, and Courbet found time to paint her with her "copper-coloured hair." Whistler lingered late on the French coast. The sea-pieces he had begun, including *Courbet on the Shore*, now owned by Mrs. J. L. Gardner, promised great things, and as the autumn went on, the place was more quiet for work, and the seas and skies more wonderful. He did not get back to London until November. A few months later, early in 1866, he sailed for Valparaiso.

This journey to Valparaiso is the most unaccountable adventure in his sometimes unaccountable career. Various reasons for it have been given : health, a quarrel, restlessness, a whim. But we tell the story as he told it to us :

"It was a moment when many of the adventurers the war had made of many Southerners, were knocking about London, hunting for something to do, and, I hardly knew how, but the something resolved itself into an expedition to go and help the Chilians and, I cannot say why, the Peruvians too. Anyhow, there were South Americans to be helped against the Spaniards. Some of these people came to me, as a West Point man, and asked me to join—and it was all done in an afternoon. I was off at once in a steamer from Southampton to Panama. We crossed the Isthmus, and it was all very awful—earthquakes and things—and I vowed, once I got home, that nothing would ever bring me back again.

"I found myself in Valparaiso, and in Santiago, and I called on the President, or whoever the person then in authority was. After that came the bombardment. There was the beautiful bay with its curving shores, the town of Valparaiso on one side, on the other, the long line of hills. And there, just at the entrance of the bay, was the Spanish fleet, and, in between, the English fleet, and the French fleet, and the American fleet, and the Russian fleet, and all the other fleets. And when the morning came, with great circles and sweeps, one after another sailed out into the open sea, until the Spanish fleet alone remained. It drew up right in front of the town, and bang went a shell, and the bombardment began. The Chilians didn't pretend to defend themselves. The people all got out of the way, and I and the



*(Nocturne, Blue and Gold)*



*(Study for the large picture)*

# VALPARAISO



STUDY OF BATTERSEA BRIDGE  
*(Chalk Drawing)*



## CHELSEA DAYS

officials rode to the opposite hills, where we could look on. The Spaniards conducted the performance in the most gentlemanly fashion; they just set fire to a few of the houses, and once, with some sense of fun, sent a shell whizzing over toward our hills. And then I knew what a panic was. I and the officials turned and rode as hard as we could, anyhow, anywhere. The riding was splendid, and I, as a West Point man, was head of the procession. By noon, the performance was over. The Spanish fleet sailed again into position, the other fleets sailed in, sailors landed to help put out the fires, and I and the officials rode back into Valparaiso. All the little girls of the town had turned out, waiting for us, and as we rode in called us 'Cowards!' The *Henriquetta*, the ship fitted up in London, did not appear till long after, and then we breakfasted, and that was the end of it."

Mr. Theodore Roussel says Whistler once told him that, on another occasion, he got on one of the defending gunboats and had his baptism of fire amid a rain of shot and shell, a fact which, fine as it is, he omitted from his story to us.

He made good use of his time in Valparaiso, and painted the three pictures of the harbour which are known and two others which have disappeared. These he gave to the steward, or the purser of the ship, to bring home, and the purser kept them. Once they were seen in his rooms, or house, in London by some one who recognised Whistler's work. "Why, they must be by Whistler!" he said. "Who's Whistler?" asked the purser. "An artist," said the other. "Oh, no," said the purser, "they were painted by a gentleman." The purser started back for South America, and took them with him. "And then a tidal wave met the ship and swept off the purser, the cabin and the Whistlers."

The voyage back was vaguer than the voyage out. From this vagueness looms one figure: the Marquis de Marmalade, a black man from Hayti, who made himself obnoxious to Whistler, apparently by his colour and his swagger. One day Whistler kicked him across the deck to the top of the companion way, and there sat a lady who proved an obstacle

1866]

## JAMES McNEILL WHISTLER

for the moment.<sup>27</sup> But Whistler just picked up the Marquis de Marmalade, dropped him on the step below her, and finished kicking him downstairs. After that, Whistler spent the rest of the journey, not exactly in irons, but chiefly in his cabin.

The final adventure of the journey was in London. Whistler never told us, but everybody else says that when he got out of the train at Euston, or Waterloo, some one, besides his friends was waiting: whether the captain of the ship, or relations of the Marquis de Marmalade, or an old enemy, really makes little difference. Somebody got a thrashing, and this was the end to the most extraordinary and unaccountable episode in Whistler's life.



PORTRAIT OF WHISTLER  
*(Chalk Drawing)*



## CHAPTER XII. CHELSEA DAYS CONTINUED. THE YEARS EIGHTEEN HUNDRED AND SIXTY-SIX TO EIGHTEEN HUNDRED AND SEVENTY TWO.

IT was late in 1866 when Whistler returned from Valparaiso. Soon after, he moved into No. 2, at the east end of Lindsey Row, now No. 96 Cheyne Walk. It was a three-story house with an attic, part of the old palace remodelled, and, like No. 7, it looked on the river, only a few yards away. Here he lived longer than anywhere else, here he painted the Nocturnes and the great portraits, here he gave his Sunday breakfasts. He had a friendly house-warming on February 5 (1867), when the two Rossettis dined with him, and Mr. W. M. Rossetti wrote in his diary :

“ There are some fine old fixtures, such as doors, fireplaces, and Whistler has got up the rooms with many delightful Japanesisms. Saw for the first time his pagoda cabinet. He has two or three sea-pieces new to me : one, on which he particularly lays stress, larger than the others, a very grey unbroken sea [probably *Sea and Rain*], also a clever vivacious portrait of himself begun.”

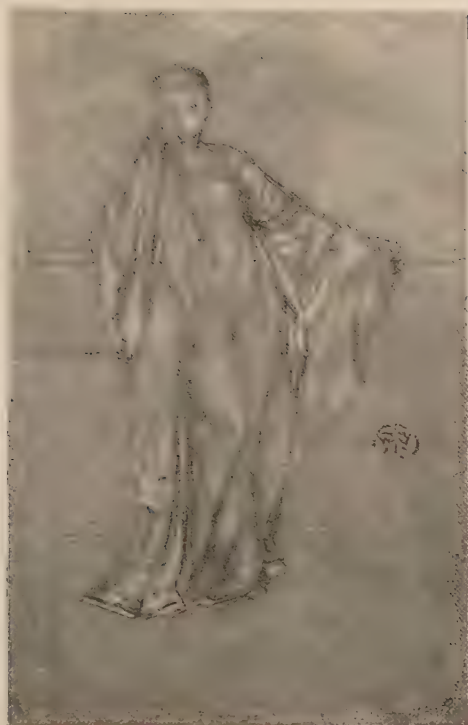
No doubt, this is the portrait in round hat, paint-brushes in his hand, owned by the late Mr. George McCulloch, the first oil in which the white lock appears.

Mr. Greaves says that the dining-room at No. 2 was blue, with a darker blue dado and doors, and purple Japanese fans tacked on the walls and ceiling ; other friends remember “ a fluttering of purple fans ” : the fans “ broidered ” at the 1867]

## JAMES McNEILL WHISTLER

foot of Fusi-yama, to him as beautiful as the marbles of the Parthenon. One evening when Miss Chapman was dining there, and Whistler wanted her to see the view up the river from the other end of the bridge as he was painting it, he told her, if she would come out with him, he would show her something "as lovely as a fan!" The studio, again the second-story back room, was grey, with black dado and doors; from the *Mother* and the *Carlyle*, one knows that there were Japanese hangings and prints on the walls; and in it was the big screen, which he painted for Leyland but always kept for himself, with Battersea Bridge running across the top, Chelsea Church beyond, and a great gold moon in the blue sky. The stairs were covered with Dutch metal. He slept in a huge Chinese bed. Beautiful silver was on his table. He ate off blue and white. "Suppose one of these plates was smashed?" Miss Chapman asked Whistler once. "Why, then—you know," he said, "we might as well all take hands and go throw ourselves into the Thames!"

The beauty of the decoration, as at No. 7, was its simplicity, an innovation when men were wavering between the riot of Victorian vulgarity and the overpowering opulence of Morris mediævalism. From descriptions, Rossetti's house was a museum, an antiquity shop, in comparison. The simplicity seemed the more bewildering because it was the growth, not of weeks, but of years. The drawing-room was not painted until the day of Whistler's first dinner-party. In the morning he sent for his pupils, the brothers Greaves, to help him. "It will never be dry in time!" they feared. "What matter?" said Whistler, "it will be beautiful!" "We three worked like mad," is Mr. Walter Greaves' account, and by evening the walls were flushed with flesh-colour, pale yellow and white spread over doors and woodwork, the tapestries were in place, and, we have heard, gowns and coats too were touched with flesh-colour and yellow before



STUDIES IN BLACK AND WHITE CHALK  
*(For the Six Projects)*



## CHELSEA DAYS

the evening was at an end. One Sunday morning, Whistler, hurrying home after he had taken his mother to Chelsea Church, as he always did, again sent for his pupils, and painted a great ship with spreading sails in each of the two panels at the end of the hall. His mother was not so pleased when, on her return, she saw the blue and white harmony, for she would have had him put away his brushes on Sunday as once she had put away his toys. But she had many other trials and revelations: coming into the studio one day, she found the parlour-maid posing for "the allover!" The ships were in place long before the dado of hall and stairway was covered with gold, and sprinkled with rose and white chrysanthemum petals. Miss Alexander (Mrs. Spring-Rice) saw Whistler at work upon it when she came to sit, and he had lived six years at No. 2. Not one of Whistler's houses was ever completely decorated and furnished; they had a look as if he had just moved in, or was just moving out; often there were packing-cases and trunks about, but as much as was finished was always beautiful.

Whistler was represented at all the important exhibitions of 1867, in London and Paris. He began the year by sending to the French Gallery, in January, one of the pictures painted in Valparaiso: *Crépuscule in Flesh Colour and Green* it is now called, the property of Mr. Graham Robertson. It is the long picture of Valparaiso Harbour in the early evening, ships moored with partly furled sails; the first painting of twilight, and one of the first paintings carried out in the liquid manner of the later Nocturnes. In this there is a great advance: it is the first of the Nocturnes. There were critics then to call it a "poem in colour," though Whistler had not yet taught them to look for the "painter's poetry" in his work. The upright Valparaiso, a perfect Nocturne, was done at the same time, 1866, but not exhibited until afterwards. It was owned by Mr. George McCulloch, and 1867]

## JAMES McNEILL WHISTLER

another unfinished version of the same subject belonged to Mr. T. R. Way.

In the Salon of 1867, where it had been rejected eight years before, *At the Piano* was accepted, and also *The Thames in Ice—Sur la Tamise: l'Hiver*. It was the year of the French Universal Exhibition. Whistler was not invited to exhibit in the British section. Mr. W. M. Rossetti notes in his diary :

“March 29 (1867).— . . . Whistler looked in. He says that he never from first to last received any invitation to contribute to the British section of the Paris Exhibition. This might seem invidious, but the result is that he gets in the American section much more space than could have been allotted him in the British.”

Whistler's name was hardly known in America, and M. Duret writes that, probably, Mr. George Lucas spoke of Whistler to Mr. Avery, the Art Commissioner for the United States at the Exhibition. The result was that a number of his etchings and four pictures were hung: *The White Girl*, *Wapping or On the Thames*, *Old Battersea Bridge*, *Twilight on the Ocean*, the title then of the Graham Robertson *Val-paraiso*. The Hudson River school dominated American art, and Whistler's paintings had to compete with the big *machines* of Church and Bierstadt. Tuckerman, in his *Book of the Artists*, quotes an unnamed American critic who, in 1867, found that Whistler's etchings differed from his paintings in meriting the attention they attracted, for he could see in the *Marines* only “blurred, foggy imperfections,” and in *The White Girl* only

“a powerful female with red hair, and a vacant stare in her soulless eyes. She is standing on a wolf-skin hearth-rug, for what reason is unrecorded. The picture evidently means vastly more than it expresses—albeit expressing too much. Notwithstanding an obvious want of purpose, there is some boldness in



SEA-BEACH AND FIGURES

(Pastel)

(Study for the Six Projects)



STUDY OF NUDE

(Chalk Drawing)

(Studies for the Six Projects)



## CHELSEA DAYS

the handling, and singularity in the glare of the colours which cannot fail to divert the eye and weary it."

The Americans were not treated with much respect by the Hanging Committee. Their work was put in corridors and dark corners, and Whistler undoubtedly suffered from the hanging. But this does not account for the fact that the French critics, enthusiastic four years before, were now hardly more appreciative than the American. Paul Mantz no longer saw poetry in this "strange white apparition"; he was distressed by the head, which had always been to him of insupportable ugliness; and, consistent in his inconsistency, he pointed to the charming and rare relations in dress and rug, though, when the picture was at the *Salon des Refusés*, the rug had created discord for him. Burty now thought that the prints shared the fate of the paintings, that either time had not been favourable to them, exaggerating their defects, or else critical eyes had lost their indulgence. The etchings were photographic, and had a dryness and minuteness, due, no doubt, to the early training of "Mr. Whystler." Both these men were writing in the *Gazette des Beaux-Arts*.

Whistler was, nevertheless, satisfied with his success, and to enjoy it he and his brother, Dr. Whistler, went to Paris early in April. The enjoyment was interrupted by an event of which we should say nothing, had not too much been already said for it to be ignored. It ought never to have been made public, but then Whistler's affairs always were made public, through no fault of his. The incident is to his honour, showing that he was generous and staunch to his friends.

In Paris, the brothers heard of the death of Mr. Traer, Seymour Haden's assistant, a member of the British Jury, on which Haden also served. Traer was always liked by Whistler, to whom he sat for one of the group in the etching of *The Music Room*, and one of the figures in the dry-point *Encamping*. Circumstances in connection with Traer's  
1867]

## JAMES McNEILL WHISTLER

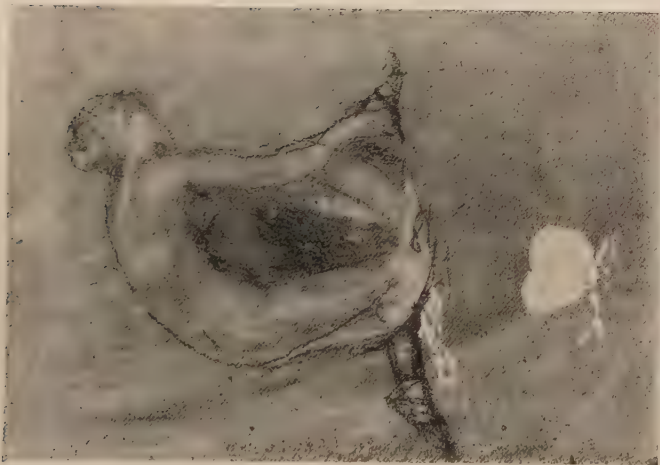
death and burial led to a misunderstanding between the two brothers and the brother-in-law. Seymour Haden was in Paris and the three met. The dispute was short and sharp, and the result was a summons for the two brothers to appear before a *juge de paix*. Whistler had appeared in the same court only a few days earlier. A workman had dropped plaster on him as he passed through a narrow street in the Latin Quarter, and he had met the offence in the one way possible, according to his code. Whistler had then sent for the American Minister, and the magistrate had apologised. But when he appeared this time, "*Connu!*" said the *juge de paix* and there was no apology, but a fine. Haden said he fell through a plate-glass window, Whistler that he knocked him through. Haden maintained that both brothers were against him, Whistler that he demolished Haden single-handed.

It happened just when London gossip got hold of the story of the Marquis de Marmalade and Whistler's arrival in London from Valparaiso. Dr. Moncure Conway, in his *Reminiscences*, recalls a dinner given by Dante Rossetti to W. J. Stillman, in the winter of 1867, when

"Whistler (a Confederate) related with satisfaction his fisticuff with a Yankee [really the black Marquis] on ship-board, William Rossetti remarked: 'I must say, Whistler, that your conduct was scandalous.' (Stillman and myself were silent.) Dante Gabriel promptly wrote:

'There's a combative Artist named Whistler  
Who is, like his own hog-hairs, a bristler:  
A tube of white lead  
And a punch on the head  
Offer varied attractions to Whistler.'"

It was at this time, too, that Whistler had a difference with Legros, to which no reference would be made had it not also become a legend. Friends tried to reconcile them, and only succeeded in spreading the report of the difference.



NUDE STUDY  
(*Chalk*)

(*Studies for the Six Projects*)



THE LILY  
(*Pastel*)



## CHELSEA DAYS

It is in these matters one regrets that Whistler did not tell his own story. The rumours spread, and, within a month or two, Whistler began to be talked of as quarrelsome : there had been no such talk before the journey to South America. Then Haden, back in London, resigned his post as honorary surgeon to South Kensington Museum, printed a pamphlet to explain, and threatened to resign from the Burlington Fine Arts Club, of which both he and Whistler were members, unless Whistler was expelled. Mr. W. M. Rossetti's diary furnishes these details :

"June 13, 1867.—Whistler . . . has been written to by the Burlington Club, if he does not resign on account of the Haden row, they would have to consider his expulsion . . . Gabriel and I agree in considering this very improper, as it amounts to condemning one member unheard on the *ipse dixit* of the other. . . . December 13, 1867.—Whistler's expulsion was voted by eighteen against eight. . . I handed in my resignation to Wornum."

Two or three days later, December 17 :

"Gabriel has now sent in his resignation to the Burlington Club."

To us Mr. W. M. Rossetti writes :

"When a motion was brought on for expelling him from the Burlington Fine Arts Club, I moved a counter-resolution, and, on the motion for expulsion being carried, I resigned my membership of the club. My opinion in that matter was not that Whistler had been blameless in the conduct which led to the motion for expulsion, but that the club had no claim to interfere in an affair which had not occurred in the club premises, nor even in the United Kingdom."

Whistler's manner of resenting injury had a great deal to do with his future, and with the way he was treated in England. People who did not know him became afraid of him, and this fear grew, and was the reason of the reputation that clung to him for years, and that clings to his memory.

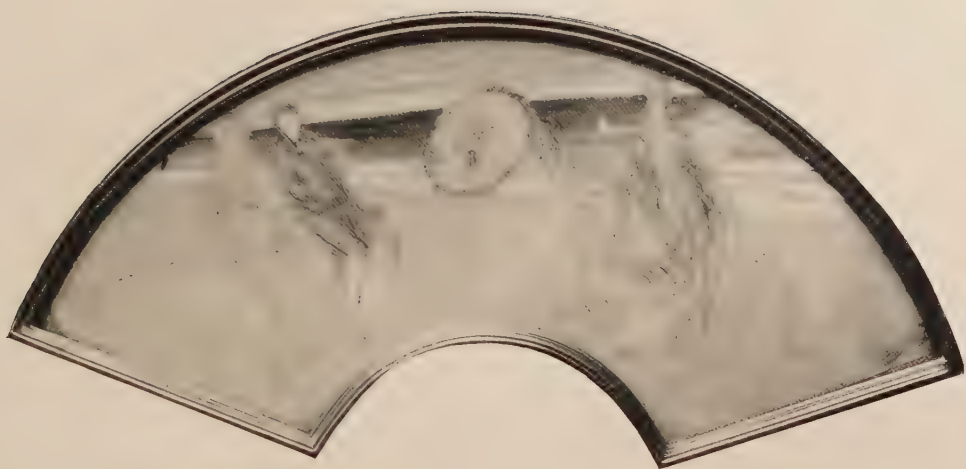
Before Whistler's pictures went to the Royal Academy, Mr. W. M. Rossetti saw them :

## JAMES McNEILL WHISTLER

“*March 31 (1867).*—To see Whistler’s pictures for the R.A. To the R.A. he means to send *Symphony in White, No. III.* (heretofore named *The Two Little White Girls*), and a Thames picture ; possibly also one of the four sea pictures ; and I rather recommended him to select the largest of these, which he regards with predilection, of a grey sea and a very grey sky.”

Battersea, the grey river with barges going up with the tide, was the Thames picture decided upon ; *Sea and Rain*, painted when Whistler and Courbet worked together at Trouville, was the sea picture ; and *The Two Little White Girls*, at present in Mr. Davis’ collection, was sent under its new name, *Symphony in White, No. III.* ; the first time one of his pictures was catalogued as a Symphony, his first use of a title borrowed from musical terms to explain his pictorial intentions.

Baudelaire had already given him the hint, and Gautier had already written symphonies in verse. One of Murger’s Bohemians had already composed a *Symphonie sur l’influence du bleu dans les arts*. In 1863 Paul Mantz had described *The White Girl* as a “Symphony in White.” There can be no doubt that from these things Whistler got the name that in the Academy passed for a deliberate affectation, an insult to the people’s intelligence. The picture in itself might not have offended. It was his third variation of his study of white upon white. Some of the detail of *The Little White Girl* was repeated. The only difference was that now there were two figures instead of one, and that the change of his technique, from the use of thick to thin flowing paint, was more apparent than ever. The offence was in the title. The critic of the *Athenæum* had the sense to thank the “painter who endeavours by any means to show people what he really aims at.” But he was almost alone. Burty, in noticing the Academy of 1867 for the *Gazette des Beaux-Arts*, thought the Academy’s hanging



DESIGN FOR A FAN  
(*Water-colour*)



TILLIE : A MODEL  
(*Dry-point*)  
(*Studies for the Six Projects*)



## CHELSEA DAYS

Whistler at all a fine piece of irony, and took the occasion to regret the painter's failure to fulfil his early promise, a regret the British critics repeated until the end of the artist's life.

Hamerton, in the *Saturday Review*, June 1, 1867, represented still better the general feeling of the insulted, solemn, bewildered ones :

"There are many dainty varieties of tint, but it is not precisely a symphony in white. One lady has a yellowish dress and brown hair and a bit of blue ribbon ; the other has a red fan, and there are flowers and green leaves. There is a girl in white on a white sofa, but even this girl has reddish hair ; and of course there is the flesh-colour of the complexions."

Whistler answered in a letter, first published, however, in the *Art Journal* for April 1887, and afterwards in the *Gentle Art of Making Enemies* :

"*Bon Dieu !* did this wise person expect white hair and chalked faces ? And does he then, in his astounding consequence, believe that a symphony in F contains no other note, but shall be a continued repetition of F F F ? . . . Fool !"

Whistler believed that to carry on tradition was the artist's business. Rembrandt, Velasquez, Claude, Canaletto, Guardi, Hogarth, Courbet, the Japanese, in turn influenced him. Some see, at this period, the influence of Albert Moore, which, if it existed at all, was as ephemeral and superficial as Rossetti's. It could be argued with more truth that Whistler influenced Albert Moore, who, for at least two pictures, *Harmony of Orange and Pale Yellow*, *Variation of Blue and Gold*, borrowed Whistler's titles. Whistler also believed that the study of the masters could have no other end than to evolve something entirely personal, and, in the endeavour to develop his personality, he was passing through a moment of experiments, difficulties and discouragements.

1867] I : K 145

## JAMES MCNEILL WHISTLER

All this we find in his letters to Fantin, to whom he explained the study of white upon white, elaborated in his three *Symphonies in White*. A fourth was started: some say the *Three Figures* intended for Leyland. In the *Two Girls*, he wrote to Fantin, the harmony was repeated in line as in colour, and he sent a sketch of it. Alternately he exulted in the rhythm of the lines, and despaired because he could not give this rhythm as he would. The picture was scraped down and repainted, and with each fresh difficulty he deplored the mistakes of his early training. Mr. Eddy says that Whistler used to call Ingres the “*bourgeois* Greek.” This we never heard him say, nor is there any such want of respect in his letters to Fantin, for there he expresses regret that he did not study under Ingres, whose work he may have liked moderately, but from whom he would have learned to draw: which was an absurd piece of modesty for he drew better than Ingres, as his etchings prove. He never execrated Courbet, nor denounced *ce damné Réalisme*, so violently as in the autumn of 1867, and it was not quite fair, for Realism had brought Courbet to the conclusions which Whistler, unaided, was now reaching: that study of art, ancient and modern, familiarity with tradition, has no other object than the development of one’s own individuality, and that the artist is to go to Nature for inspiration, but to take from it only its life and its beauty. Whistler, in his impatience, recalled Realism as practised by the young enthusiasts gathered about Courbet, and denied vigorously that Courbet could have influenced him. “*Ça ne pouvait pas être autrement, parce que je suis très personnel, et que j’ai été riche en qualités qu’il n’avait pas et qui me suffisaient.*” The cry of “Nature” had appealed to his vanity as painter, Whistler said, and he had mocked at tradition, and in his early pictures had copied Nature with the self-confidence of “*l’écolier débauché.*” He chafed over the time he had lost



STUDIES FOR THE SIX PROJECTS  
(Chalk)



SYMPHONY IN WHITE, NO. III.





Symphony in White, No. III - Whistler 1867 -



## CHELSEA DAYS

before discovering for himself that art is not the exact reproduction of Nature, but its interpretation, and that the artist must seek his motives in Nature, and then weave from them a beautiful pattern on his canvas. Pattern, harmony, repetition are words ever recurring in his letters, as the same tone or colour recurs in his design, and was compared by him to the thread of silk running through a piece of embroidery. He was loud in praise of Fantin's flowers, because he saw in them this repetition, this pattern. Passages in some of the letters might have come out of the *Ten o'Clock*. His definition of the relation of drawing to colour—"son amant, mais aussi son maître"—seems the germ of the idea, there worked out, of the artist as the son and the master of Nature; "her son in that he loves her, her master in that he knows her." Whistler had a way of using the same idea over and over again, in his talk, in his letters, in his pamphlets, perfecting it with use, so that often it is impossible to say where a certain expression, phrase or doctrine originated.

It was not only the change in his attitude toward Nature that was preoccupying him. He was perfecting the technical method of which the beginnings are seen in the *Symphonies in White*, No. II. and No. III., and which was brought to perfection in the *Nocturnes*. Altogether, the period was one of transition, with its attendant hopes and fears. Those who saw him intimately know how hard he worked, and how endlessly he was discouraged. For a while he lived with Mr. Frederick Jameson, the architect. He never spoke to us of this interval away from Lindsey Row, and Mr. Jameson is certain only that it was about 1868 or 1869. Most likely it was in the winter of 1867-68, when Mrs. Whistler went home to visit her family and friends, whom the war had left poor and broken. Mr. Jameson was settled at No. 62 Great Russell Street, Bloomsbury, in rooms that

1868]

## JAMES McNEILL WHISTLER

had first been Burne-Jones', and then Poynter's. He writes us :

"The seven months Whistler and I lived there together were unproductive and uneventful. He was working at some Japanese pictures, one of which, quite unfinished, was hung at the late exhibition of his pictures. I have seen that one—at least large portions of it—apparently completely finished, but they never satisfied him, and were shaved down to the bed-rock mercilessly. The man, as I knew him, was so different from the descriptions and presentations I have read of him, that I would like to speak of the other side to his character. It is impossible to conceive of a more unfailingly courteous, considerate and delightful companion than Whistler, as I found him. We lived in great intimacy, and the studio was always open to me, whatever he was doing. We had all our meals together, except when elsewhere engaged, and I never heard a complaint of anything in our simple household arrangements from him. Any little failure was treated as a joke. His courtesy to servants and models was particularly charming, indeed, I can't conceive of his quarrelling with any one without real provocation. His talk about his own work revealed a very different man to me from the self-satisfied man he is usually believed to have been. He knew his powers, of course, but he was painfully aware of his defects—in drawing, for instance. I can remember with verbal accuracy some very striking talks we had on the subject. To my judgment, he was the most absolutely truthful man about himself that I ever met. I never knew him to hide an opinion or a thought—nor to try to excuse an action."

The picture Mr. Jameson refers to was in the London Memorial Exhibition, and there called *Three Figures, Pink and Grey*. It was the same design Whistler used for one of his *Six Schemes or Projects*,\* which now all belong to Mr. Freer. In them, he was trying to combine Japanese and classical motives, expressing a beauty of form and design that haunted him, and was perhaps best realised in the little pastels of draped figures, classic in feeling, and as wholly

\* Mr. Fenellosa, in an article apparently inspired by Mr. Freer, says there are eight.

THREE FIGURES

*Pink and Grey*







## CHELSEA DAYS

his own in invention and arrangement as the Nocturnes and the portraits. He never ceased to make these classic studies. Years after, he gave Mr. T. R. Way a tiny drawing like a cameo, which we reproduce. And there are numbers of designs of the same sort owned by others. There are many pastels, chalk drawings and several etchings in which the separate figures of the *Projects* may be found, studies for the series which never was completed ; one, owned by Mr. C. H. Shannon, was worked out as a fan. Of the second version of the *Three Figures*, enlarged from a smaller design, Mr. Alan S. Cole remembers Whistler explaining it as an arrangement of beautiful lines he wanted to carry out, and then drawing in, with one sweep of the brush, the back of the stooping figure to show what he meant. Whether there was any commission for the series we are not sure, though Mr. W. M. Rossetti most likely referred to it when he wrote in his diary for July 28, 1867 :

“ Whistler is doing on a largish scale for Leyland the subject of women with flowers, and has made coloured sketches of four or five other subjects of the like class, very promising in point of conception of colour and arrangement.”

It is probable, therefore, that the *Projects* were his first scheme of decoration for Leyland. The six canvases are all, virtually, the same size. They mark the new development in his technique and are painted with the thinnest, most liquid colour, the canvas often showing through, and nothing could be fresher and more spontaneous. The work in all save the finished *Venus*, shown in the Paris Memorial Exhibition, and worked on in his later years, is more simple and direct than anything in oil he ever did. They have the same relation to his finished pictures as the sketches of Rubens and Tiepolo to their great decorations. The *Venus* stands alone, but, in the five others, two, three, or four women are grouped against a balustrade, round a vase of

1868] 149

## JAMES McNEILL WHISTLER

flowers, or on the sands with the sea beyond. In one especially, No. 3, *Symphony in Green and Violet*, the figures, in their strange beauty, recall Rossetti. Their floating draperies give the scheme of colour: No. 1, *Symphony in White*, the study for the larger version of the *Three Figures*; No. 4, *Symphony in White and Red*—"full palette" was his one comment on this when he asked Mr. Cole to come round and see it one Sunday; No. 5, *Variations in Blue and Green*; No. 6, *Symphony in Blue and Rose*.

The experience gained by Whistler in making these designs was of immense use to him when he painted the Nocturnes, for the technique is the same, and the same treatment can be seen in the pile of drapery on the left in the *Miss Alexander*. He did not give up, until much later, this method of painting. He never, we believe, exhibited the designs, and it is doubtful if the complete series had been seen publicly before they were shown in Paris in 1905. During all his life, till the last when he was given a commission for a panel in the Boston Public Library, Whistler hoped to carry out some great decorative scheme. When the Central Gallery at South Kensington was being decorated by Leighton and others, Sir Henry Cole asked him to execute one of the panels in mosaic. For this, in the winter of 1873, he made a pastel of a richly robed figure carrying a Japanese umbrella. The scheme was in blue, purple and gold, and the pastel, owned by Mr. Graham Robertson, was shown at the London Memorial Exhibition as *Design for a Mosaic*. Another version belongs to Mr. Howard Mansfield. He spoke of it at the time as *The Gold Girl*. The small design was to be enlarged, and put on a big canvas, which his "pupils," the brothers Greaves, he said, would do for him. He was alive to its importance, he wrote to Mr. Alan S. Cole, and his pride in it was great. It has been stated that Sir Henry Cole offered him a studio in the Museum when he was ready to begin his large cartoon.



DESIGN FOR MOSAIC FOR SOUTH KENSINGTON MUSEUM  
(Pastel)



## CHELSEA DAYS

“ You know, Sir Henry Cole always liked me,” was Whistler’s story to us, “ and I told him he ought to provide me with a fine studio—it would be an honour to me—and to the Museum ! ” But models broke down, the fog settled over London, he wanted to get through his Academy picture first, he was called to Paris on business. The interruptions and delays were many. Whether the large cartoon ever was finished, or whether, when finished, it was found to be out of keeping with the academic and classic *machines* by Royal Academicians which now fill the Central Gallery, is not known. At any rate, this project was never realised.

The year of Whistler’s discouragements as a painter gave fresh proof of the position accorded to him as an etcher. Hamerton’s *Etching and Etchers* was published in 1868. Shortly before, he had written to Whistler :

“ I wonder whether you would object to lend me a set of proofs for a few weeks. As the book is already advanced, I should be glad of an early reply. My opinion of your work is, on the whole, so favourable, that your reputation could only gain by your affording me the opportunity of speaking of your work at length.”

The only notice Whistler took of the request was to print it years afterwards as the *Unanswered Letter* of *The Gentle Art*. Hamerton, the critic, was not used to being ignored by artists. He could not keep his irritation out of his book :

“ I have been told that, if application is made by letter to Mr. Whistler for a set of his etchings, he may, perhaps, if he chooses to answer the letter, do the applicant the favour to let him have a copy for about the price of a good horse.”

Eventually, this comment, headed *Inconsequences*, was placed after the *Unanswered Letter*. Hamerton admitted that Whistler

“ has very rare and very peculiar endowments, and may, in a certain sense, be called great—that is, so far as greatness may  
1868] 151

## JAMES McNEILL WHISTLER

be understood of faculties which are rather remarkable for keenness and originality than range."

But the praise is never without qualification. If Whistler is a "fine etcher," he is a "strikingly imperfect artist." His work is often "admirable," but it is

"rarely affecting, because we can so seldom believe that the artist himself has been affected. It is very observant, very penetrating, very sensitive even, in a peculiar way, but not poetically sensitive. . . . Whistler's etchings are not generally remarkable for poetical feeling."

This last sentence was reprinted by Whistler as part of Hamerton's *Inconsequences*. Hamerton also thought that Whistler was a master of line, though he did not seem to love anything, did not seem from his work ("I do not know him personally," Hamerton's conscience forced him to say) to be "altogether expansive or sympathetic, but self-concentrated and repellent of the softer emotions." In the end, Whistler let Hamerton have a plate, *Billingsgate*, which, in its third state, was published in the *Portfolio* for January 1878, and, two years after, in the third edition of *Etching and Etchers* (1880), with Hamerton's original criticisms very slightly modified.

Hamerton, temperate in his estimate of Whistler's work, went to the extreme of exaggeration in his comments on Whistler's prices. His success never induced Whistler deliberately to increase the value of his etchings by making them rare, in the fashion of the young men of to-day. It was different with his dry-points, the number of impressions being necessarily limited. Mr. Percy Thomas, in talks of the old days and visits to Lindsey Row, has told us that Whistler would throw them on the floor and consider them. "I think for this we must say five guineas—and for this six—and for this I must say—ten!" Only once, however, can Mr. Thomas remember an attempt, or a desire, on

## CHELSEA DAYS

Whistler's part to create an artificial price. He had been sent from Bond Street to Lindsey Row, with prints to leave for Whistler to sign, and the next day he returned for them. Whistler and Mrs. Whistler were sitting together, silent and unhappy, and Whistler hurried from the studio without a word. "But what is it? What has happened?" Mr. Thomas asked, and then Mrs. Whistler explained that Whistler had thrown the prints into the fire—thinking it would be a good thing to make them rare, and had been miserable ever since. Another incident remembered by Mr. Thomas would have altered Hamerton's idea of Whistler's business methods. Edmund Thomas had gone to the studio and offered a certain sum for all the prints in it at the time. Whistler accepted the offer: Mr. Thomas drew his cheque, satisfied with his part of the bargain, and carried off the prints. A couple of hours later, a messenger appeared at the shop with another bundle of proofs. Whistler had come upon them in an unexpected corner of the studio; and sent word that, according to the bargain, they belonged to Mr. Thomas.

Toward the end of the 'sixties, or beginning of the 'seventies, shortly after the publication of Hamerton's book, Mr. Murray Marks proposed to start a Fine Art Company with Alexander Ionides, Rossetti, Burne-Jones, and Morris. Their object was to deal in pictures, prints, blue and white and decorative work. They were to have the exclusive right to sell Watts', Burne-Jones' and Rossetti's pictures, and Whistler's etchings, possibly also his paintings. Ionides, who was to advance some two or three thousand pounds, as were the others, bought with his own money the sixteen plates by Whistler now known as *The Thames Set*, and all the prints from them in his possession. The sum paid was three hundred pounds. A secretary was engaged for the company, but, somehow, that was the end of it. The plates were thus left the absolute

1868]

## JAMES McNEILL WHISTLER

property of Mr. Ionides. He had a hundred sets printed; he gave one set to each of his children; the others were taken over by Messrs. Ellis and Green, and the series published by them as *Sixteen Etchings of Scenes on the Thames*, in 1871, price twelve guineas. Later, the plates came into the possession of the Fine Art Society, and they sold the prints unsigned as a set, in a portfolio, for fourteen guineas, or, singly, from half a guinea apiece to two guineas and a half. Finally Mr. Keppel of New York bought the plates, had the steel facing removed, for they had been steeled, and got Mr. Goulding to print a number of each, when some extremely good prints were obtained. The plates were then, we believe, destroyed.

All this while, official recognition of Whistler, the etcher had continued. The British Museum kept on buying his prints, and only stopped when, suddenly, a few years ago, it was discovered that the work of living artists could not be bought for the Print Room. The ignorance of this regulation up till then was of value to the Museum, where there now are one hundred and four prints. At the Victoria and Albert Museum, South Kensington, there are sixty-one prints, besides several issued in various publications, and there is a second *Thames Set* in the Ionides Collection. For several years, dating from this period, Sir Richard R. Holmes purchased etchings directly from Whistler for Windsor Castle Library: about one hundred and forty in all. A list of these is in the London Memorial Catalogue. Sir Richard R. Holmes writes us:

“It is difficult for me to say when, or how, I first began the collecting of Whistler’s etchings. I had a few, and then I met several while I was engaged in looking after other things at Thibaudeau’s, and then, gradually, I found I had so many that I thought it best to make the collection as complete as I could, and got many from Whistler himself.”

## CHELSEA DAYS

Often Sir Richard went to the studio; often Whistler sent prints to Windsor, which he thought should be there, and which Sir Richard was only too glad to buy. The *Venice Set* was bought, and the proofs in the Royal Library, or some of them, at least, were the finest we have ever seen. Curiously, they were sold at what was supposed to be the height of the "Whistler boom," and after they had been greatly praised at the Memorial Exhibitions in London and Paris. As Sir Richard, however, had retired, and as the King on his visit to the London Memorial Exhibition expressed great surprise at the few he looked at, it is almost certain that His Majesty had hitherto been unaware of the fact that the collection was at Windsor. Even the Portfolio presented by Whistler to Queen Victoria, with his autograph letter asking her acceptance, was sold in 1906, the few prints in Princess Victoria's apartments only being left. The disposal of the collection was so badly managed that this *Jubilee Series* alone brought more, when re-sold a few weeks after the King parted with them, than His Majesty got for the whole collection. During Whistler's lifetime, important collections of his etchings were acquired also by the Museums of Dresden, Venice and Melbourne, among others.

The success of Whistler's plates during 1868 and the following years is in strong contrast to the fate of his pictures which, from now on for a long period, received officially little but neglect, and popularly little but contempt. He had nothing in the Academy of 1868. Mr. Jameson has told us of his despair when the *Three Girls* was not finished in time, and of their wandering together about town, in and out of galleries and museums, until, at last, before Velasquez, in the National Gallery, Whistler took heart again. In 1869 he did not have a chance to profit by the improvement, when the Academy

1871]

## JAMES McNEILL WHISTLER

moved to Burlington Gardens, and in one of its rare moments of reform abolished "top line" and "crinoline line." In 1870, he had one picture, *The Balcony*. In 1871 there was nothing. Nor, during these four years, did he have anything in the Salon. Whistler, like Rossetti, was never without his public, though many years passed before he received from it Rossetti's rewards. He could rely on practical recognition from the Ionides; from Mr. Leathart, the Newcastle merchant; from Frederick Leyland, the Liverpool shipowner, a genius in his way, "the Liverpool Medici" as Whistler called him to us; from Mr. Huth, Mr. Alexander, Mr. Rawlinson, Mr. Anderson Rose, Mr. Jameson, Mr. Chapman, Mr. Potter. But, unlike Rossetti, he wanted to show his work in official places, and receive for it official honours. His absence from official exhibitions was then seldom his fault; he was always getting rejected at the Academy. It was his hatred of rejection and fear of being badly hung that drove him from exhibitions where he had no control.

The tyranny of the Academy was no new thing. In the 'sixties and 'seventies, the opening of the Summer Exhibition was almost every year the occasion of scandal and of protest against an Academy that rejected the most distinguished artists, or offered them the greater insult of skying their work. One gallery after another took up the cause of outsiders, or was established to take it up. After the Berners Street Gallery came the Dudley, which, in 1867, added to its show of water-colours an independent exhibition of oils; in 1868, the Corinthian Gallery in Argyll Street; in 1869, the Select Supplementary Exhibition in Bond Street, but both these last were poor affairs, more apt to justify than to expose the Academy. Dealers also came to the rescue, more especially the directors of the French Gallery in Pall-Mall, and the Society of French Artists organised at No. 168



VARIATIONS IN VIOLET AND GREEN  
*(In the Frame designed by Whistler)*



## CHELSEA DAYS

New Bond Street, by M. Durand-Ruel, who came to London in 1870, on account of the Franco-German War, bringing with him his own collection and Laurent Richard's, and, who, under the management of M. Charles Deschamps, gave half-yearly exhibitions until 1877. In the French Gallery and with the Society of French Artists, Whistler showed many times. He also contributed often to the Dudley, beginning in 1871, when he exhibited *Variations* and a *Harmony*. The next year he exhibited several *Symphonies* and, for the first time, an impression of night with the title *Nocturne*. His use of titles to explain his pictorial intentions was now so well established that this same year (1872), when *The White Girl* and the *Princesse* were in the International Exhibition at South Kensington, they were catalogued respectively as *Symphony in White, No. I.*, and *Variations in Flesh-colour, Blue and Grey*, later changed to *Grey and Rose*; and he supplied the explanation, printed in the Programme of Reception, that they were "the complete results of harmonies obtained by employing the infinite tones and variations of a limited number of colours."

His portrait of his mother was sent to the Academy of 1872 with the title, *Arrangement in Grey and Black: Portrait of the Painter's Mother*. It was refused at first. There was indignation outside the Academy. Madox Brown wrote to George Rae :

"I hear that Whistler has had the portrait of his mother turned out. If so, it is a shame, because I saw the picture, and know it to be good and beautiful, though, I suppose, not to the taste of Messrs. Ansdell and Dobson."

There was indignation also inside the Academy. Sir William Boxall threatened to resign from the Council if the portrait was not hung, for he would not have it said that a committee to which he belonged had rejected it. Similar threats have  
1872]

## JAMES McNEILL WHISTLER

been heard in recent years, and the rejected work has stayed out, and the Academicians have stayed in. Boxall, though an Academician, would not yield, and the picture was hung, not well, yet not out of sight; groups, it is said, were always gathered before it to laugh. Still, there it was, the last picture by Whistler at the Academy, where nothing of his was again seen, save one etching in 1879, *Putney Bridge*, published by the Fine Art Society, and perhaps sent by them.

The whole affair made talk. But 1872 is interesting, not so much because of this Academic scandal as because it is the year when, for the first time, Whistler exhibited a portrait as an *Arrangement*, and an impression of night as a *Nocturne*.

As it was the last time he ever showed a picture in the Academy, it may be as well to complete here our account of his relations with this institution. It is said that he put his name down, or allowed it to be put down, for election. He was never elected. Other Americans were, for the Royal Academy is so broad in its constitution that an artist need not be an Englishman, need not be resident in Great Britain, need not have shown on its walls, to become a member or honorary member. But, though during all these years and until the day of his death, Whistler would have accepted election, we have never heard that he obtained a single vote. George Boughton, an American artist and a member, of the Royal Academy, put the matter plainly when he said that, if Whistler had "behaved himself"—behaved himself, that is, according to the Academical idea of behaviour—he would have been President. And this concession Boughton felt it necessary to qualify.

"Now, if any one knowing Whistler and me should go about thinking me serious in imagining that he would make a good President—even of an East End boxing club—such persons live in dense error."

## CHELSEA DAYS

Whistler would have accepted election for one reason, and one reason only—because of the official rank it would have given him in England. Artistically, he felt himself more distinguished than any member of the Royal Academy. Though every recognition was withheld during his lifetime, several Academicians attempted to secure for the Academy a sort of posthumous glory by endeavouring to get together an exhibition of his works the winter after his death. It would, indeed, have been irony if the Academy had, in return for its neglect of Whistler, got the *kudos* and profit that the International Society alone had a right to. Another instance of what Americans call “graft” is in the absence from the Chantrey Collection of a picture by Whistler, and the presence of the work of Academicians who administer the Fund. The Trustees, although they have bought their own work, paying as much as one thousand pounds to Sir Edward J. Poynter, three thousand to Sir Hubert von Herkomer, three thousand and fifty to Lord Leighton, two thousand to Sir J. E. Millais, Bart., over two thousand to Mr. Frank Dicksee, two thousand to Sir W. Q. Orchardson, two thousand to Vicat Cole, who are or were members of the Council of the Academy, never even offered the sixty pounds for which they might have bought Whistler’s *Nocturne in Blue and Gold: Old Battersea Bridge*, since purchased for two thousand by public subscription, and given to the Tate Gallery. Is it any wonder then that Whistler, disgusted with such conduct towards him, especially on the part of his fellow countrymen, members of the Academy, who might have elected him, left as his only written request relative to his pictures that we have seen, the wish that none of them should ever find a place in an English Gallery? In his case, death even did not spare him Academical jealousy. Not content with ignoring this man during his lifetime, officially insulting his memory after his death, Sir Edward Poynter, 1872]

## JAMES McNEILL WHISTLER

when he hung *Old Battersea Bridge*, first in the National Gallery, affixed to it, or allowed to be affixed, a label on which Whistler's name was misspelt, Whistler himself was described as of the British School, and the title of the picture was incorrectly given. The picture has since, by the irony of fate, been placed in the Gallery of Modern British Art !

## CHAPTER XIII. NOCTURNES, THE YEARS EIGHTEEN SEVENTY-TWO TO EIGHTEEN SEVENTY-FOUR

**W**HISTLER was the first to paint the night. The blue mystery that veils the world from dusk to dawn is in the colour-prints of Hiroshige. But the wood block cannot give the depth of the darkness, the medium makes a convention of the colour. Hiroshige saw and felt the beauty, and invented a wonderful scheme by which to suggest it on the block, but he could not render the night as Whistler rendered it on canvas.

If the colour-prints of Japan suggested the Nocturnes, they were merely the suggestion. Whistler never imitated the Japanese in their technique. Their composition did impress him, their arrangement, their pattern, and some of their detail. Often the very high or very low horizon, the line of a bridge over a river, the spray of foliage across the foreground, the golden curve of the falling rocket, the placing of the figure on the shore, the signature in its oblong panel, will show how much he learned from them. But these are details. He abandoned them within a few years, but he never gave up, he developed rather, what he always spoke of as the Japanese theory of drawing. He translated Japanese art—translate is the word—though he would have said he “carried on the tradition”; he adapted it to his own methods in painting the Nocturnes. His idea was not to go back to the Japanese as being greater than himself, but to learn what he could from them, to state it in his own way

1872-74]                      I : L                      161

## JAMES MCNEILL WHISTLER

and to produce another work of art: a work founded on tradition no less than theirs, and yet as western as theirs was eastern.

Night, beautiful everywhere from Valparaiso to Venice, was never so beautiful as in London. First he painted the Thames in the grey day, but, as time went on, he began to paint it in the blue or rosy darkness that made of it a wonderland. Only those who have lived by the river for years, as we have, can realise the truth as well as the beauty of the Nocturnes. He still, like Courbet, "loved things for what they were," but he chose them for their exquisiteness, their tenderness, their poetry. The brutality or the "foolishness" of Nature made no appeal to him. But Courbet was not more of a realist than Whistler in the Nocturnes, if realism means truth to Nature.

The long nights of observation on the river were followed by long days of experiment in the studio. In the end, he gave up even making notes of subjects and effects. It was impossible for him to choose and mix his colours at night, and he was compelled to trust to his memory, which he cultivated. In his portraits and pictures, and in all work done by daylight, he always had a model, or worked from the subject on the spot. But, after all, as Mr. Bernhard Sickert has well pointed out, looking at colours and their arrangement at night, retaining the memory of them until the next morning when he put them down, was "simply painting from Nature, the only difference being a longer interval between observation and execution." When he said that "Nature put him out," he meant that the whole arrangement as he found it in Nature put him out; it was never exactly as he wanted it. Few painters understood better than he did the art of selection, and here again Hiroshige and the other Japanese had been of use to him. He went to Nature for the suggestion, the motive. And yet, it is curious that he never could work



NOCTURNE, BATTERSEA  
*(Arrangement in Grey and Gold)*



NOCTURNE  
*(Blue and Green)*



## NOCTURNES

without a model or, except in the Nocturnes, away from Nature. This was why, as he said, Nature was at once his master and his servant. The Nocturnes looked so simple that to a public trained by the Pre-Raphaelites to believe the signs of labour the chief merit of a picture, they seemed mere sketches, unfinished, as Burne-Jones said. His letters to Fantin are full of regret for his uncertainty, his slowness: "*Je suis si lent. . . . Les choses ne vont pas vite. . . . Je produis peu parce que j'efface tout !*" The public could know nothing of the hard work and study that went to produce the simplicity. In no other paintings was Whistler as successful in obeying his own precept and concealing every trace of effort and toil. One touch less in some of the Nocturnes, and you feel that nothing might be left ; in others, one touch more and the spell might be broken, and night stripped of its mystery. To give the silhouette of bridge or building against the sky ; the lines of light trailing their gold into the water and leading to infinite distance ; the boats, ghosts fading into the ghostly river ; the fall of rockets through shadowy air—to give all these things, and yet to keep them enveloped in the transparency of darkness, to preserve the feeling of the London night, was the problem he set himself and solved in the Nocturnes in blue and silver, blue and gold, grey and silver, opal and silver, that were painted in the little second-story back room at Chelsea.

Now every one can see these things, and night is like a Whistler, for Whistler made people look at his pictures, until it has become impossible to look at Nature at night without remembering the Nocturnes. He painted the effect that the world at night produced on him, and the great artist, like the great author, moves people, makes them think they see things as he does. Even in that ever-quoted passage from the *Ten o'Clock*, he does not pretend to see Nature as people see her, or as Nature seems to be ; his

## JAMES McNEILL WHISTLER

concern is with the impression that Nature at night made on him, and in this he was an impressionist.

The brothers Greaves bought his materials and prepared his canvas and colours. "I know all these things because I passed days and weeks in the place standing with and beside him," Walter Greaves has said to us. And so it happens that, of the methods and materials of few other modern painters, is there so accurate a record as of Whistler's when he painted the Nocturnes. He reshaped his brushes usually, heating them over a candle, melting the glue and pushing the hairs into the form he wanted. Walter Greaves remembers that the colours were mixed with linseed oil and turpentine. Whistler told us that he used a medium composed of copal, mastic and turpentine. The colours were arranged upon a palette, a large oblong board some two feet by three, with the Butterfly inlaid in one corner and, round the edges, sunken boxes for brushes and tubes. The palette was laid upon a table. He had at various periods two or three of these, and at least one stand, with many tiny drawers, upon which it fitted. At times it was slightly tilted. At the top of the palette the pure colours were placed, though, more frequently, there were no pure colours at all. Large quantities of different tones of the prevailing colour in the picture to be painted were mixed, and so much medium was used that he called it "sauce." Mr. Greaves says that the Nocturnes were mostly painted on a very absorbent canvas, sometimes on panels, sometimes on bare brown holland, sized. For the blue Nocturnes, the canvas was covered with a red ground, or the panel was of mahogany, which the pupils got from their own boat-building yard, the red forcing up the blues laid on it. Others were done on "practically a warm black," and for the fireworks there was a lead ground. Or, if the night was grey, then, Whistler said, the sky is grey, and the



CREMORNE  
(Nocturne)



CREMORNE  
(Nocturne in Green and Gold)



## NOCTURNES

water is grey, and therefore the canvas must be grey. Only once, within Mr. Greaves' memory, was the ground white. The ground, for his Nocturnes, like the paper for his pastels, was chosen of the prevailing tone of the picture he wanted to paint or of a colour which would give him that tone, not to save work, but to save disturbing, "embarrassing," his canvas.

When Whistler had arranged his colour-scheme on the palette, the canvas, which the pupils prepared, may have been stood on an easel, but so much "sauce" was used that, frequently, it had to be thrown flat on the floor to keep the whole thing from running off. He washed the liquid colours on to the canvas, lightening and darkening the tone as he worked. In many Nocturnes, the entire sky and water are rendered with great sweeps of the brush of exactly the right tone. How many times he made and wiped out that sweeping tone is another matter. When it was right, there it stayed. With his life's knowledge of both the effects he wanted to paint and the way to paint them, at times, as he admits himself, he completed a Nocturne in a day. In some he got his effect at once, in others it came only after innumerable failures. If the tones were right, he took them off his palette and kept them until the next day, in saucers or dishes under water, so that he might carry on his work in the same way with the same tones. Mrs. Anna Lea Merritt tells us that when she lived in Cheyne Walk she remembers "seeing the Nocturnes set out along the garden wall to bake in the sun." Some were laid aside to dry slowly in the studio, some were put in the garden or on the roof to dry quickly. Sometimes they dried out like body-colour in the most unexpected fashion. He had no recipe, no system. The period was one of tireless research. He had to "invent" everything, though he profited by the technical training he had gained in painting the *Six Projects*.  
1872-74]

## JAMES McNEILL WHISTLER

Whistler first called his paintings of night "Moonlights." "Nocturne" was Mr. Leyland's suggestion, as we have heard from Mrs. Leyland, and her son-in-law, Val Prinsep, stated in the *Art Journal* (August 1892), that Whistler wrote to Leyland:

"I can't thank you too much for the name 'Nocturne' as the title for my moonlights. You have no idea what an irritation it proves to the critics, and consequent pleasure to me; besides it is really so charming, and does so poetically say all I want to say and *no more* than I wish."

Whether to mystify, or because he saw something new in his pictures, Whistler repeatedly changed their titles, especially of the Nocturnes, and repeatedly exhibited different pictures with the same title. It is true, as Mr. Bernhard Sickert writes:

"such alterations made by the artist himself stultify the whole idea, and prove that the analogy with music does not hold consistently. Any musician would tell us that we could not change the title of Symphony in C minor to Sonata in G major without making it an absurdity."

That he should either not have realised this fact, or else have disregarded it deliberately, is the more extraordinary because every Nocturne represents a different effect rendered in a different fashion. Although he altered his titles himself, nothing offended him more than when others tampered with them or imitated them.

The painting of the Nocturnes continued for many years, and in many places. But the greater number were painted when he lived at No. 2 Lindsey Row, many from his own windows, while few took him beyond Chelsea and Battersea or Westminster. Through most the river flows: several were done at Cremorne; one in Trafalgar Square, Chelsea. He resented it when people urged literary titles for them,

OLD BATTERSEA BRIDGE

*Nocturne, Blue and Gold*







## NOCTURNES

and he put his resentment into words that “ make history ” in *The Gentle Art* :

“ My picture of a ‘ *Harmony in Grey and Gold* ’ is an illustration of my meaning—a snow scene with a single black figure and a lighted tavern. I care nothing for the past, present, or future of the black figure, placed there because the black was wanted at that spot. All that I know is that my combination of grey and gold is the basis of the picture. Now this is precisely what my friends cannot grasp. They say, ‘ Why not call it “ Trotty Veck,” and sell it for a round harmony of golden guineas ? ’ ”

Lord Redesdale told us that it was he who suggested this title, gaily. Whistler assured another friend that he had only to write “ Father, dear Father, come home with me now ” on the painting for it to become the “ picture of the year.” But he never wanted to put into his pictures of night more than was expressed in the title Leyland had given him. Subject, sentiment, meaning were for him in the night itself—the night in all its loveliness and mystery. There is no doubt that he carried tradition further and made greater advance in the Nocturnes than in any of his paintings. The subjects are usually the simplest : factories, bridges, boats and barges, shops ; but in his hands they became things of beauty that will live for ever. The Nocturnes are not all moonlights ; we remember only one, *Southampton Water*, in which the moon itself appears, and there are others illumined only by flickering lamplight. They are not invariably pictures of night, but at times of dawn or of twilight. Nocturne, however, is the name Whistler chose for all, and by it they will always be known.

## CHAPTER XIV. PORTRAITS FROM EIGHTEEN SEVENTY-TWO TO EIGHTEEN SEVENTY-FOUR

**W**HILE Whistler was painting the Nocturnes, he was also working on the large portraits. The *Mother* was the first. The charm of Mrs. Whistler's presence was felt by every one who came near her, but by none so deeply as her son. We cannot say just when Whistler began the picture; he wrote of it to Fantin, promising to send a photograph, in 1871; but it was not shown until 1872. How many were the sittings, how often the work was scraped down, or wiped out, no one will ever know. Some interesting technical details we have from Mr. Greaves. The portrait was painted on the back of a canvas, as J. saw when it was sent to the London Memorial Exhibition, as Mr. Otto Bacher also saw when the picture was in Whistler's studio in 1883.

"I noticed that it was painted on the back of a canvas, on the face of which was the portrait of a child. My remark, 'Why you have painted your mother on the back of a canvas!' received simply the reply: 'Isn't that a good surface?'"

There was scarcely any paint used, Mr. Greaves says,\* the canvas being simply rubbed over to get the dress, and, as at first the dado had been painted all across the canvas, it even now shows through the black of the skirt. That wonderful handkerchief in the tired old hands, Mr. Greaves describes as "nothing but a bit of white and oil."

What Whistler wanted was to place upon a canvas a

\* Mr. Harper Pennington says that the canvas, being absorbent, was stained, even saturated all through from the painting on the back. But this does not alter Mr. Greaves' statement in the slightest.

PORTRAIT OF THE PAINTER'S MOTHER

*Arrangement in Grey and Black*







## PORTRAITS

beautiful arrangement, a beautiful pattern, of colour and of line. No painter since Hals and Velasquez ever thought so much of placing his figure on the canvas inside the frame ; not only do the long straight lines of the dado give the figure its proper place, but the upright lines are repeated in the hangings, and the two framed prints continue the square quiet pattern. Better than any painter since Velasquez, he understood the value of restrained line and restrained colour. The long, vertical and horizontal lines of the background, even of the footstool and the matting, even the brushwork on the wall, give quietness and peace to the portrait, and the pose, that could be kept for ever, is more dignified than the frenzied action preferred by certain of his predecessors. Hamerton thought he must have found this pose, or the hint for it, in the Agrippina at the Capitol in Rome, or in Canova's statue of Napoleon's mother at Chatsworth. If Whistler found it anywhere except in his own studio, it could only have been at Haarlem, where Franz Hals' old ladies sit together with something of the same serenity and dignity expressed in much the same scheme of colour. Whistler had been to Holland, he must then have known the beautiful group, and memories of it may have haunted him.

When Whistler wrote of the *Mother* to Fantin, he said that if the picture marked any progress, it was in the science of colour, and he made this clear in the title when the portrait was exhibited at the Academy, and called *Arrangement in Grey and Black*. Swinburne has not been alone in seeing its "intense pathos of significance and tender depth of expression." But this is not what Whistler intended any one, save himself, to see.

"Take the picture of my mother, exhibited at the Royal Academy as an 'Arrangement in Grey and Black.' Now that is what it is. To me it is interesting as a picture of my mother ; but what can or ought the public to care about the identity of the portrait ? "

## JAMES McNEILL WHISTLER

And yet friends did sometimes get a glimpse of the other side. Mr. Harper Pennington writes us :

“ Did I ever tell you of an occasion when Whistler let me see him with the paint off—with his brave mask down ? Once standing by me in his studio—Tite Street—we were looking at the *Mother*. I said some string of words about the beauty of the face and figure—and for some moments Jimmy looked and looked, but he said nothing. His hand was playing with that tuft upon his nether lip. It was perhaps two minutes before he spoke. ‘ Yes,’ very slowly, and very softly—‘ Yes—one does like to make one’s mummy just as nice as possible ! ’ ”

Some understood at the time, among them Carlyle. Whistler told us, one August evening in 1900, that Madame Venturi, his friend, and Carlyle’s too, determined that he should paint Carlyle.

“ I used to go often to Madame Venturi’s—I met Mazzini there, and Mazzini was most charming—and Madame Venturi often visited me, and one day she brought Carlyle. The *Mother* was there, and Carlyle saw it, and seemed to feel in it a certain fitness of things, as Madame Venturi meant he should—he liked the simplicity of it, the old lady sitting with her hands folded on her lap—and he said he would be painted. And he came one morning soon after that, and he sat down, and I had the canvas ready, and the brushes and palette, and Carlyle looking on, said presently : ‘ And now, mon, fire away ! ’ I was taken aback—that wasn’t my idea of how work should be done. Carlyle realised it, for he added : ‘ If ye’re fighting battles or painting pictures, the only thing to do is to fire away ! ’ One day he told me of others who had painted his portrait. ‘ There was Mr. Watts, a mon of note. And I went to his studio, and there was much meestification, and screens were drawn round the easel, and curtains were drawn, and I was not allowed to see anything. And then, at last, the screens were put aside and there I was. And I looked. And Mr. Watts, a great mon, he said to me, “ how do ye like it ? ” And then I turned to Mr. Watts, and I said, “ Mon, I would have ye know I am in the hobit of wurin’ clean lunen ! ” ’ ”

Carlyle told people afterwards that he sat there talking



PORTRAIT OF THOMAS CARLYLE

*Arrangement in Grey and Black, No. II.*



SKETCH IN PEN AND WASH OF THE "CARLYLE"





## PORTRAITS

and talking, and that Whistler went on working and working and paid no attention to him whatever. Whistler found Carlyle a delightful person, and Carlyle found him a workman. And it has been said that they used to take walks together, but of this there is no record.

Before the portrait was finished, Whistler had begun to paint Miss Alexander, and another story, often told, is of a meeting at the door of No. 2 between the old man coming out and the little girl going in. "Who is that?" he asked the maid. Miss Alexander, who was sitting to Mr. Whistler, she said. Carlyle shook his head. "Puir lassie! Puir lassie!" and, without another word, he went out. Mrs. Leyland, whose portrait also was begun before Carlyle's was finished, remembered that he grumbled a good deal. Whistler, in the end, had to get Phil Morris to sit for the coat. Mr. Greaves' memories are of much impatience in the studio, especially when Carlyle saw Whistler working with small brushes, so that Whistler, to quiet him, either always worked with big brushes or pretended to. William Allingham wrote in his diary of the sittings:

"Carlyle tells me he is sitting to Whistler. If C. makes signs of changing his position, W. screams out in an agonised tone: 'For God's sake, don't move!' C. afterwards said that all W.'s anxiety seemed to be to get the coat painted to ideal perfection; the face went for little. He had begun by asking two or three sittings, but managed to get a great many. At last C. flatly rebelled. He used to define W. as the most absurd creature on the face of the earth."

If Carlyle liked the portrait of the *Mother*, he must have liked his own. There is the same quiet, tranquil balance, the same careful spacing. Take away either the circular sprint or the Butterfly in its circle, and the repose is gone. But with such care has every detail been arranged, that one never thinks of the balance, the arabesque, the pattern. It is done, and all traces of the thought and the work are gone.

1872-74]. 171

## JAMES McNEILL WHISTLER

One sees only the result Whistler meant should be seen. It has been said to show a want of invention. But if the background and the general scheme are the same as in the *Mother*, it was because he painted it in the same room and was deliberately carrying out the same idea. It was his *Arrangement in Grey and Black, No. II*. In the London Memorial Exhibition it hung opposite the *Mother*, and as they were seen together, the pose and colour and design belonged as inevitably to the nervous old man as to the old lady in her beautiful tranquillity.\*

The *Harmony in Grey and Green: Portrait of Miss Alexander*, a commission from Mr. W. C. Alexander of Campden Hill, was painted at the same time, and proves how little Whistler's invention was at fault. The arrangement was now silvery grey and green. There was no repetition. The little girl, in her white and green frock, holding at her side her feathered hat, butterflies hovering about her, the weariness of the pose expressed in the pouting red lips, as she stands by the grey wall with its long lines of black, is as familiar as Velasquez' *Infantas* in wide-spreading hoops. Less known is Whistler's care in every detail to make the picture the masterpiece it is. He, or else his mother, gave Mrs. Alexander directions as to the quality of the muslin for the daughter's gown, where it was to be bought, the width of the frills, the ruffles at the neck, the ribbon bows, the way the gown was to be laundried. And, only after repeatedly seeing and studying the picture, does one learn his care in weaving the same colours through his design. He calls the portrait *Harmony in Grey and Green*, but the colours which bind all this arrangement together, which play all though it, are green and gold. So wonderfully are these colours used like gold threads in tapestry, that one does not see them :

\* A second large painting of the head of Carlyle was made and is owned by Mr. Burton Mansfield.

PORTRAIT OF MISS CICELY HENRIETTA ALEXANDER

*Harmony in Grey and Green*



STUDY FOR HEAD OF  
CICELY H. ALEXANDER





## PORTRAITS

one simply feels the result. As always, there was the great simple design : the pose of Velasquez, the decoration of Japan, and all worked out in his own way. The gold runs along the top of the dado ; tiny gold buckles fasten the rosettes of her shoes ; there is a gold pin in her hair ; the gold of the daisies is repeated in the butterflies which flutter above her head ; a note of gold is in the pile of drapery beside her ; and the floor has a suggestion of gold in the matting. Green plays the same note through the picture. The great green sash is carried down by the green feather of her hat, lost in the shadow which, also, is filled with green and gold. And the green of the daisies is again repeated in the green of the drapery. It is not until one has gone all over the picture that these things become evident. Her shoes look perfectly black, and so does the dado, and yet there is no pure black anywhere. The whole is bound together by this grey, green, black and gold scheme running through the composition. It is a perfect harmony. And so subtle is it, that only the result is evident, never the means by which it was obtained.

The story of the sittings we have from Miss Cicely Alexander herself (now Mrs. Spring-Rice) :

“ My father wanted him to paint us all, I believe, beginning with the eldest (my sister, whom he afterwards began to paint, but whose portrait was never finished). But after coming down to see us, he wrote and said he should like to begin with ‘ the light arrangement,’ meaning me, as my sister was dark. So I was the first victim, and I’m afraid I rather considered that I was a victim all through the sittings, or rather standings, for he never let me change my position, and I believe I sometimes used to stand for hours at a time. I know I used to get very tired and cross, and often finished the day in tears. This was especially when he had promised to release me at a given time to go to a dancing class, but when the time came I was still standing, and the minutes slipped away, and he was quite absorbed and had forgotten all about his promise, and never noticed the tears ; he used to stand a good way from his canvas, and then dart at

## JAMES McNEILL WHISTLER

it, and then dart back, and he often turned round to look in a looking-glass that hung over the mantelpiece at his back—I suppose to see the reflection of his painting. Although he was rather inhuman about letting me stand on for hours and hours, as it seemed to me at the time, he was most kind in other ways : if a blessed black fog came up from the river, and I was allowed to get down, he never made any objection to my poking about among his paints, and I even put charcoal eyes to some of his sketches of portraits done in coloured chalks on brown paper ; and he also constantly promised to paint my doll, but this promise was never kept. I was painted at the little house in Chelsea, and at the time he was decorating the staircase ; it was to have a dado of gold, and it was all done in gold leaf, and laid on by himself, I believe ; he had numberless little books of gold leaf lying about, and any that weren't exactly of the old gold shade he wanted, he gave to me.

“Mrs. Whistler was living then, and used to preside at delightful American luncheons, but I don't remember that she ever came into the studio—a servant used to be sent to tell him lunch was ready, and then we went on again as before. He painted, and despair filled my soul, and I believe it was generally tea-time before we went to those lunches, at which we had hot biscuits and tinned peaches, and other unwholesome things, and I believe the biscuits came out of a little oven in the chimney, though I can't quite think how that could have been. The studio was at the back of the house, and the drawing-room looked over the river, and we seldom went into it, but I remember that it had matting on the floor, and a large Japanese basin with water, and gold-fish in it. I never met Mr. Carlyle in the studio, although he was being painted at the same time, but he shook hands with me at the private view at the Grosvenor Gallery, where the two portraits were exhibited for the first time. [This must have been at Whistler's own exhibition in 1874.] I didn't appreciate that honour at the time, any more than I appreciated being painted by Mr. Whistler, and I'm afraid all my memories only show that I was a very grumbling, disagreeable little girl. Of course I was too young to appreciate Mr. Whistler himself, though afterwards we were very good friends when I grew older, and when he used to come to my father's house and make at once for the portrait with his eye-glass up.”



STUDIES FOR "THE BLUE GIRL" (MISS FLORENCE LEYLAND)  
(Pen and Ink)



SKETCHES OF MISS CICELY H. AND MISS GRACE ALEXANDER  
(Pen and Ink)



## PORTRAITS

It is said that the tears were not only on the little girl's side, but on Whistler's, and that there were seventy sittings before he finished the portrait. Mrs. Spring-Rice writes nothing about the number of times the picture was scraped down and re-commenced. He was beginning at this time to try to paint the entire work at once, which, on such large canvases was of the utmost difficulty. That he succeeded is proved by the picture. But the technical record is neither full nor satisfactory. What his colours were, how he applied them, whether he used enormously long brushes, no one recorded. There is this of interest from Mr. Walter Greaves, that the picture was painted on an absorbent canvas, and on a distemper ground.

Whistler was as minute in his directions for the portrait of Miss May Alexander. He again explained his scheme for the dress; he recommended to Mrs. Alexander a milliner who sold wonderful "picture hats"; he suggested that he should paint the portrait in Mrs. Alexander's drawing-room at Campden Hill, so that he could see the effect of the picture in the surroundings where it was to hang, and this was done. But the portrait remains a sketch, of a girl in riding-habit drawing on her gloves; at her side is a pot of flowers, the one complete passage in the picture. He made a number of sketches in oils, chalk, pen and ink, of the children he was to paint, and Mr. Alexander has several of these. But only the *Arrangement in Grey and Green* was finished. There is also a delightful study for the head.

At this same time Mr. Leyland gave Whistler commissions to paint his four children, Mrs. Leyland and himself. Leyland had not yet bought his London house, but often came up to town, usually staying at the Alexandra Hotel, and Whistler made long visits at Speke Hall, Leyland's place near Liverpool. Mrs. Whistler spent months there, and her kindness in nursing the children through scarlet fever is  
1872-74]

## JAMES McNEILL WHISTLER

remembered. The record of these visits is in the etchings and dry-points of *Speke Hall* and *Speke Shore*, *Shipping at Liverpool* and *The Dam Wood* and the portraits in many mediums. The house was not far from the sea, which he loved to paint. But often days passed without his finding the effect he wanted. The beach was flat, and, at low tide, the sea ran away from him, and at high tide the skies were wrong, or the wind blew. But Speke Hall always put him in better mood for work, and when the sea failed he turned to the portraits. The big canvases travelled with him, backward and forward, between Speke Hall and London, and the sittings were continued in both places. They all sat to him. The children hated posing as much as they delighted in Whistler. The son, after three sittings, refused to sit again, which is a pity, for the pastel of him, lounging in a chair, with his big hat pushed back and his long legs stretched out, is full of childhood. There are pastels of the three little girls, sketches in pen and ink, and the fine group of dry-points. Of Florence Leyland, a large full-length oil was started the first of his *Blue Girls*, in which he wished to paint blue on blue as he had painted white on white. Another portrait of her was never finished and we believe never exhibited until it was purchased, in 1906, for the Brooklyn Museum, where it now hangs. The oil of Mr. Leyland was the only one completed.

Whistler painted Leyland standing, in evening dress, with the ruffled shirt he always wore, against a dark background, an arrangement of black on black. Leyland was good about standing, Mrs. Leyland says, but he had not much time, and few portraits gave Whistler more trouble. Leyland told Val Prinsep that Whistler nearly cried over the drawing of the legs. Mr. Greaves says that "he got into an awful mess over it," painted it out again and again, and finally had in a model to pose for it nude. But it was finished in

PORTRAIT OF MRS. F. R. LEYLAND

*Symphony in Flesh Colour and Pin k*







## PORTRAITS

the winter of 1873. He also painted a study for it, shown in the London Memorial Exhibition. In the portrait of Leyland he began to suppress the background, to put the figures into the atmosphere in which they stood, without any accessories. The problem now was the atmospheric envelope, to make the figures stand in this atmosphere, as far within their frames as he stood from them when he painted them, and at this problem he worked as long as he lived. The portrait is now owned by Mr. Freer.

Mrs. Leyland had more leisure than her husband, and the sittings were an amusement to her. She had already sat to Rossetti, she was to sit to more than one other artist. She was a beautiful woman, with wonderful red hair. Whistler made a dry-point of her, *The Velvet Gown*, and in black velvet she wanted him to paint her. But he preferred a dress in harmony with the hair, and designed soft draperies of rose and white falling in sweeping folds, and rosettes of a deeper shade to break the simplicity of the flowing lines, and he placed her against a rose-tinted wall, with a spray of almond blossoms at her side. In no other portrait did he attempt a scheme of colour at once so sumptuous and so delicate. The pose was as beautiful, one natural to her she says, though he made a number of pastel studies before he decided upon it. Her back is turned towards you, her arms fall loosely, the hands clasped behind her, and her head is in profile. Mrs. Leyland remembers days when, at the end of the sitting, the portrait looked as if a few hours' work the next day was all it needed. But, in the morning, she would find it scraped down, with the work to be done over again. Notwithstanding the innumerable sittings she gave, one of Whistler's models, Maud Franklin, whom he now was so often to etch and to paint, was called in to pose for the draperies. Whistler knew what he wanted, and nothing less would satisfy him. It must be beautiful to be worthy of

1872-74] I : M 177

## JAMES McNEILL WHISTLER

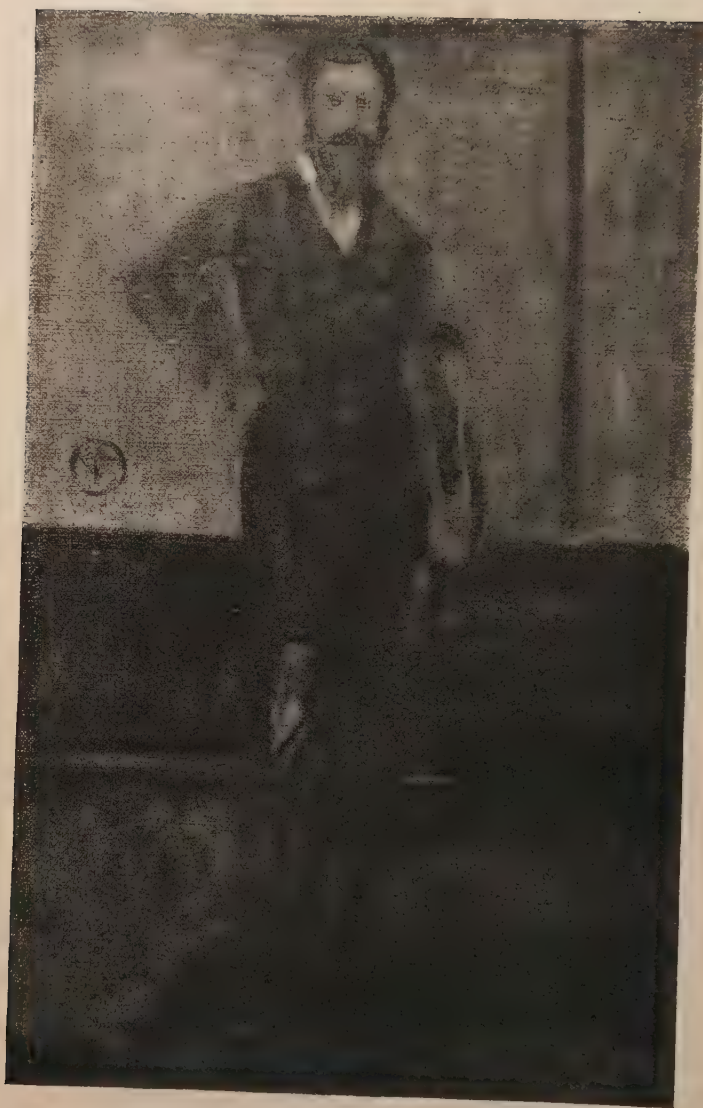
the weariness it caused her, he told Mrs. Leyland, and he was trying for the little more that meant perfection. The portrait was not finished, and yet, if it were, it could hardly be lovelier in line and colour. Here it was a problem, not of luminous dark, but of luminous light, and the accessories had not been suppressed. The matting on the floor, the dado, and the spray of almond blossoms are more elaborately carried out than the detail in any other portrait. What worried him, and probably prevented the picture being finished, are the hands, which are almost untouched. It was not that he could not draw hands, for they are beautifully drawn in some of the etchings. But there is as little doubt that he rarely painted them well. He nearly always left them to the last, and some of his later pictures were unfinished because he could not get the hands right. The *Sarasate*, *The Little White Girl*, the *Symphony in White*, No. III., are almost the only ones in which the hands are beautifully painted. Some one has said that an artist is known by his painting of hands. These three pictures prove that Whistler could paint hands, but it is as true that he did not paint them when he could help it.

The portrait of Mrs. Louis Huth was not only begun but finished during these years. It is Holbein-like in its dignity, its sobriety, the flat modelling, the exquisite rendering of the lace at the throat and the wrists. Mrs. Huth wears the black velvet Mrs. Leyland wanted to wear, and the background is black with a wonderful luminous and intense depth. She, too, stands with her back turned, and her head in profile. In this portrait, as in the full-length Leyland, Whistler carried out his method of putting in the whole picture at once. The background was as much a part of the design as the face. If anything went wrong anywhere the whole picture had to come out and be started again. It was a problem of great difficulty, but the system taught by

178 [1872-74

PORTRAIT OF F. R. LEYLAND

*Arrangement in Black*



PORTRAIT SKETCH OF F. R. LEYLAND





## PORTRAITS

Gleyre, and developed in the Nocturnes, was perfected in the portraits of *Leyland* and *Mrs. Huth*. The tones, made from a very few colours of infinite gradations, were mixed on the great palette, with black as the basis.

Mrs. Leyland sometimes met Mrs. Huth as they came and went for their sittings, and this fixes the date of the portrait. Mrs. Huth was not strong, and Whistler exhausted the strongest who posed for him. Almost daily during one summer he kept her standing for three hours without rest. At last she rebelled. Mr. Watts, she said, who also had painted her had not treated her in that way. "And still, you know, you come to me!" was Whistler's comment. He had some mercy, however, and at times a model stood for her gown.

With the exception of the *Mother*, not one of these portraits appeared in an exhibition for some years. After the Academy of 1874 opened with nothing of his in it, he took matters into his own hands, and, as Courbet had done in 1855, and Manet in 1867, organised a show of his own: his first "one man" show. The gallery was at No. 48 Pall Mall. The pictures, thirteen in number, included the large portraits, a few Nocturnes, one or two earlier paintings and one or two of the *Projects*. There were also fifty prints. The walls, as Mrs. Stillman remembers them, were grey, the pictures were well spaced, there were palms and flowers, blue pots and bronzes, and it was all very beautiful. He designed the card of invitation, the simple card he always used, and with his mother and his pupils, and their family, wrote the names and addresses, "all making Butterflies as hard as we could," Mr. Greaves says, rushing out and posting the cards until the letter-boxes of Chelsea were in a state of congestion unprecedented in that quiet corner of London. The private view was on June 6.

The exhibition was a shock to London. Such defiance might be understood in Paris, though even there the action

## JAMES McNEILL WHISTLER

of Courbet and Manet was questioned; in London, it was new, and therefore to be suspected. The decorations were an indiscretion; no one had before suggested to people whose standard was the Academy that a show of pictures might be beautiful. The work was a more serious offence. Portraits, called *Arrangements* or *Symphonies* scandalised a generation who, blinded by the yearly Academic display, could not see the beauty of Whistler's flat modelling, and of flesh low in tone, and who would have frankly confessed their preference for the "foolish sunset" to the poetry of night. But even the pictures could have been forgiven more easily than the titles. From the moment he exhibited *Arrangements* and *Nocturnes*, his growing reputation for eccentricity was established beyond a doubt.

"I know that many good people think my nomenclature funny and myself 'eccentric.' Yes, 'eccentric' is the adjective they find for me. The vast majority of English folk cannot and will not consider a picture as a picture, apart from any story which it may be supposed to tell. . . . As music is the poetry of sound, so is painting the poetry of sight, and the subject-matter has nothing to do with harmony of sound or of colour."

He had robbed them of their only pleasure in art. Well received at first, his position in public favour had, for the last few years, hung in the balance. Now, his exhibition weighed in the scales against him, and from this time on, for almost twenty years, ridicule was his portion. The exhibition exasperated the critics. The *Athenæum* and the *Saturday Review* took no notice of it. The *Pall Mall*, remembering Hamerton, saw in the collection more intellect than imagination. Here and there was a polite murmur of "noble conception" and "Velasquez touch." Of all that was said Whistler singled out for notice then, and preservation afterwards, the comments of a forgotten journal, the *Hour*. It has been wondered why he noticed papers of such small

180 [1872-74

PORTRAIT OF MRS. HUTH

*Arrangement in Black, No. II.*







## PORTRAITS

importance. When he answered the critics, and kept the correspondence, it was "to make history," he said, and he selected what he thought important, though it might come from an insignificant source. The *Hour* suggested that the best works in the show were not of recent date; Whistler wrote to remove "the melancholy impression"; and notice and letter "make history," for it was about this moment that it began to be said of him in England, France having taken the lead, that he did not fulfil his early promise, and it is all recorded in *The Gentle Art*.

## CHAPTER XV. THE OPEN DOOR. THE YEAR EIGHTEEN HUNDRED AND SEVENTY-FOUR AND AFTER

“**W**HISTLER laughed all his troubles away,” it has been said. When the Academy rejected him, and the critics sneered at his pictures shown in other galleries, and the public took the critics seriously, he laughed the louder, and felt the more. Polite English ears shrank from his laugh—“his strident peacock laugh,” Mr. Colvin called it.

“He was a man who could never bear to be alone,” Mr. Percy Thomas says; he never could be alone all his life. “The door in Lindsey Row was always open,” and Whistler liked to think that at his friends’ houses the door was open to him. Lord Redesdale, who came to live in the Row in 1875, says that Whistler was always running in and out. Through his own open door strange people drifted. If they amused him, he forgave them, however they presumed, and they usually did presume. There was a man who, at this time, he said, came to dine one evening, and, asking to stay over night, remained three years :

“Well, you know, there he was—and that was the way he had always lived—the prince of parasites ! He was a genius, a musician, the first of the ‘Æsthetes,’ before the silly name was invented. He hadn’t anything to do—he didn’t do anything for me—but decorate the dinner-table, arrange the flowers, and then play the piano, and talk, and make himself amiable. He hadn’t any enthusiasm—that’s why he was so restful. He was always ready to go to Cremorne with me—it was the time of the Nocturnes. At moments my mother objected to such a loafer

## THE OPEN DOOR

about the house. And I would say to her—‘well—but—my dear mummy, who else is there to whom we could say, play, and he would play; and, stop playing, and he would stop right away!’ Then I was ill. He couldn’t be trusted with a message to the doctor or the druggist, and he was only in the way. But he had the good sense to see it, and to suggest it was time to be going—so he left for somebody else! It never occurred to him there was any reason he shouldn’t live like that.”

We have heard of many others. One, to whom Whistler entrusted the money for the weekly bills, gave lunches to his friends and sent flowers and chocolates right and left, while Whistler’s debts multiplied into fabulous sums at the butcher’s and the grocer’s.

Artists and art students came through the open door to see and to learn and were welcomed. If, however, they came to loaf and to play, they paid for it. They ran errands, posted letters, sat in the corner, interviewed greater bores than themselves. They had to give up all their time, and then the end came, and out they went.

One story in Chelsea is of a Frenchman who taught art and sold tapestry. Whistler bought a number of things from him. “But vill he pay, zis Vistlaire, vill he pay?” the man asked, and, at last one evening he went to Lindsey Row. A cab was at the door. The maid said Whistler was not in, but the man heard his voice and pushed past, and said afterwards:

“Upstairs, I find him, before a little picture painting, and behind him ze bruzzers Greaves holding candles. And Vistlaire, he say, ‘You are ze very man I vant; hold a candle!’ And I, hold a candle. And Vistlaire he paint, and he paint, and zen he take ze picture, and he go downstairs, and he get in ze cab, and he drive off, and we hold ze candle, and I see him no more. *Mon Dieu, il est terrible, ce Vistlaire!*”

But he was paid the next day.

Few men depended more on companionship than Whistler, and to few was the companionship women alone can give

## JAMES McNEILL WHISTLER

more essential. All his life, he retained his *cœur de femme* and most of his friends were women. For years, until her health broke down, his mother was always with him. Many wondered, with Val Prinsep who thought Whistler "always acting a part," whether,

"behind the *poseur*, there was not quite a different Whistler. Those who saw him with his mother were conscious of the fact that the irrepressible Jimmy was very human. No one could have been a better son, or more attentive to his mother's wishes. Sometimes old Mrs. Whistler, who was a stern Presbyterian in her religion, must have been very trying to her son. Yet Jimmy, though he used to give a queer smile when he mentioned them, never in any way complained of the old lady's strict Sabbatarian notions, to which he bowed without remonstrance."

Whistler seldom painted men except when they came for their portraits, and the models, drifting in and out of the open door of Lindsey Row, were mostly women. He liked to have them with him. Mr. Thomas thinks he felt it necessary to see them about the studio, for, as he watched their movements, they would take the pose he wanted, or suggest a group, an arrangement. An admirable example is the *Whistler in his Studio*, done in the first house in Lindsey Row. It was a beautiful study, he wrote to Fantin, for a big picture, like the *Hommage à Delacroix*, with Fantin, Albert Moore, and himself, the "White Girl" on a couch, and *la Japonaise* walking about, grouped together in his studio: all that would shock the Academicians. The colour was to be dainty,—he in pale grey, "Joe" in white, *la Japonaise* in flesh-colour, Albert Moore and Fantin to give the black note. The canvas was to be ten feet by six. If he ever did more than make the study of the two girls and himself, it has disappeared. The painting is owned by Mr. Douglas Freshfield, and is as dainty as he described it. He holds the small palette he sometimes used, with raised edges



WHISTLER IN HIS STUDIO



## THE OPEN DOOR

to keep the liquid colour from running off, he wears the long sleeved white waistcoat in which he usually painted, and he put down simply what he saw in the mirror. The two women most likely are the two models for *Symphony in White, No. III.* who have just stopped posing. Another version of this studio interior, but there is some doubt as to its genuineness, is in the City of Dublin Art Gallery. Whistler repudiated it at the last. There is nothing else of the kind as complete, but there are innumerable studies of figures, reading or sewing, really not posing, though the minute he started to draw them they had to pose. Everybody who was with him, and somebody always was, had, sooner or later, to sit to be painted, etched or drawn.

Refugees from France in 1870 drifted through the open door, artists whose work was stopped by the Commune and who came to England to take it up again. There were many, Tissot, Dalou, Professor Lantéri. Fantin stayed in Paris, but later told stories of the siege which Whistler repeated to us. He asked Fantin what he did? "Me?" replied Fantin, "I hid in the cellar. *Je suis poltron, moi.*" Tissot, within the open door, found the inspiration for his pictures on the river.

Journalists, critics, hurried to Lindsey Row, once they knew the door was open. Mr. Walter Greaves, who sometimes showed the studio, remembers doing the honours for Tom Taylor among others. Mr. Sidney Starr says Whistler told him that, while the *Miss Alexander* was in the studio, Tom Taylor was there one day:

"There were other visitors. Taylor said, 'Ah, yes, um,' then remarked that the upright line in the panelling of the wall was wrong, and the picture would be better without it, adding, 'Of course, it's a matter of taste.' To which Whistler replied, 'I thought that perhaps for once, you were going to get away without having said anything foolish; but remember, so that you may not make the mistake again, it's not a matter of taste at all, it is a matter of knowledge. Good-bye.'"

## JAMES MCNEILL WHISTLER

Journalists and critics filled columns with praise of unknown masterpieces by forgotten Academicians, but seldom spared space for the work in Lindsey Row. Their gossip, after the visit, was about the man, not his pictures.

Poets, the younger literary men, came in through the open door. Mr. Edmund Gosse, introduced by Mr. W. M. Rossetti, has described to us his impressions of the bare room, with little in it but the easel, and of the small, alert, nervous man with keen eyes and beautiful hands, who sat before it, looking at his canvas, never moving but looking steadily for twenty minutes or half an hour perhaps—and then, of a sudden, dashing at it, giving it one touch, and saying, “There, well, I think that will do for to-day!” an all-astonishing experience to a generation accustomed to tapestried studios and painters more industrious with their hands than their brains.

The fashionable world also began to crowd through the open door. Lindsey Row was lined with the carriages of Mayfair and Belgravia. Whistler was the fashion, if his pictures were not, and he could say nothing, he could do nothing, that did not go the rounds of drawing-rooms and dinner-tables. “Ha ha! I have no private life!” he told a man who threatened him with some sort of exposure. And, from this time onward, he never had.

He knew just how much his popularity meant. It was among the people who gathered about him because he was the fashion, that he could not afford to have friends. “To the rare Few, who, early in Life have rid Themselves of the Friendship of the Many,” *The Gentle Art* is dedicated, and he got rid of all unnecessary friends at the start, he often said. It was thought that he could not live without fighting, that to him “battle was the spice of life.” But he never fought until fighting was forced upon him. There were no fights, just as there was no mystery, at first. Every man

## THE OPEN DOOR

was a friend until he proved himself an enemy. When the fighting began, Whistler got pleasure out of it, no doubt, "the springs in him prompt for the challenge." He liked a fight, enjoyed it, roared over it, would shake himself joyously to and fro in talking of it, Lord Redesdale has told us of the Lindsey Row days, when Whistler would come to him in the morning at breakfast, or in the evening after dinner, to read the latest correspondence, and laugh over the dulness of the enemy. Though Whistler could not afford friends, he delighted in society, finding in it the change most men find in sport or travel. He hated to go away or to stop his work. Hunting and fishing were no pleasure to him. We never heard of his attempting to shoot, except once at the Leylands' when, he said: "I rather fancied I had shot part of a hare, for I thought I saw the fluff of its fur flying. I knew I hit a dog, for I saw the keeper taking out the shots!" His solicitor, Mr. William Webb, tried once to teach him to ride a bicycle. "Learn it? No," he said to us. "Why, I fell right off—but I fell in a rose-bush!" Motoring offended him, and he always abused J. for taking it up. But people amused him, and he enjoyed the "parade of life."

From the first, at Lindsey Row, he gave his breakfasts and dinners. Mr. Luke Ionides remembers calling one early afternoon when

"Jimmy was busy putting things straight—he asked me if I had any money. I told him I had twelve shillings. He said that was enough. We went out together, and he bought three chairs at two and sixpence each, and three bottles of claret at eighteenpence each, and three sticks of sealing-wax of different colours at twopence each. On our return he sealed the top of each bottle with a different coloured wax. He then told me he expected a possible buyer to dinner, and two other friends. When we had taken our seats at the table, he very solemnly told the maid to go down and bring up a bottle of wine, one of those

## JAMES McNEILL WHISTLER

with the red seal. The maid could hardly suppress a grin, but I alone saw it. Then, after the meat, he told her to fetch a bottle with the blue seal; and with dessert the one with the yellow seal was brought, and all were drunk in perfect innocence and delight. He sold his picture, and he said he was sure the sealing wax had done it."

This was very like him. All his life he invented wines and was continually making "finds." We remember his discovery of a wonderful *Croûte Mallard* at the Café Royal, and an equally wonderful Pouilly supplied by his French barber, who had been one of Napoleon III.'s generals, or Maximilian's *aides-de-camp*. Another thing at the Café Royal, besides the *menu* that interested him, was the N on the wine-glasses which were said to have come from the Tuileries in 1870, but, no matter how many have been broken, is still there.

We have the story of his first dinner-party from Mr. Walter Greaves, one of whose workmen was sent to Madame Venturi's to borrow and came back hung about with pots and kettles and pans, and from Mrs. Leyland, who lent her butler, and who, at the last moment, with her sister, put up muslin curtains at the windows. Different guests remember Whistler's alarm when a near-sighted young lady in white mistook the Japanese bath, filled with water-lilies, for a divan, and tried to sit in it; and Leyland's disgust when Grisi's daughter, whom he took in to dinner, would talk to him not of music, but of Ouida's novels. Every one found the *menu* "a little eccentric, but excellent." The earliest *menu* we have seen is one, in Mr. Walter Dowdeswell's possession, of a dinner in the 'eighties, not in the least eccentric, but as simple as it is characteristic of Whistler, and so we give it now: *Potage Potiron*; *Soles Frites*; *Bœuf à la Mode*; *Chapon au Cresson*; *Salade Laitue*; *Marmalade de Pommes*; *Omelette au Fromage*.



PORTRAIT OF LUKE A. IONIDES



## THE OPEN DOOR

Mr. Alan S. Cole's diary is the record of other dinners in the 'seventies, of the company, and the talk :

" *November 16, 1875.*—Dined with Jimmy ; Tissot, A. Moore and Captain Crabb. Lovely blue and white china—and capital small dinner. General conversation and ideas on art unfettered by principles. Lovely Japanese lacquer.

" *December 7, 1875.*—Dined with Jimmy ; Cyril Flower, Tissot, Storey. Talked Balzac—*Père Goriot*—*Cousine Bette*—*Cousin Pons*—*Jeune Homme de Province à Paris*—*Illusions perdues*.

" *January 6, 1876.*—With my father and mother to dine at Whistler's. Mrs. Montiori, Mrs. Stansfield and Gee there. My father on the innate desire or ambition of some men to be creators, either physical or mental. Whistler considered art had reached a climax with Japanese and Velasquez. He had to admit natural instinct and influence—and the ceaseless changing in all things.

" *March 12, 1876.*—Dined with Jimmy. Miss Franklin there. Great conversation on Spiritualism, in which J. believes. We tried to get raps—but were unsuccessful, except in getting noises from sticky fingers on the table.

" *March 25, 1876.*—Round to Whistler's to dine. Mrs. Leyland and Mrs. Galsworthy, and others.

" *September 16, 1876.*—Dined with W. Eldon there. Hot discussion about Napoleon (*Napoléon le petit*, by Hugo). The Commune, with which J. sympathised [some old fellow feeling for Courbet, the reason perhaps].—Spiritualism.

" *December 29, 1876.*—To dine with J.—the Doctor.—Goldfish in bowl. Japanese trays.—Storks and birds. He read out two or three stories by Bret Harte—*Luck of Roaring Camp*,—*The Outcasts of Poker Flat*—*Tennessee's Partner*. Chatted as to doing illustration for a Catalogue for Mitford, and to his Japanese woman, and a decorated room for the Museum.

" *February 18, 1878.*—To Whistler's.—Mark Twain's haunting jingle in the tramcar : 'Punch—punch—punch with *care*—punch in the presence of the passenger (jaire).

" *March 27, 1878.* Dined with Whistler, young Mills and Lang, who writes. He seemed shocked by much that was said by Jimmy and Eldon."

## JAMES MCNEILL WHISTLER

Whistler delighted not only in Mark Twain's, but in all jingles. He had an endless stock, and recited them in the most unexpected places and at the most inappropriate moments. He went to the trouble once to write down for us the lines of the *Woodchuck*, and now, as we read them in the familiar writing, we can only wonder why they never seemed foolish but quite right as he chanted them. In the Haden correspondence, published in *The Gentle Art*, a new version of Peter Piper may be found. He loved to quote the *Danbury News* man and the *Detroit Free Press*. He never lost his joy in certain forms of American humour, and it was because there was something of the same spirit in them that Rossetti's limericks appealed to him.

Whistler "invented" Sunday breakfasts. The day was unusual in London, and also the hour, twelve instead of nine. "Nothing exactly like them have ever been seen in the world. They were as original as himself or his work, and equally memorable," George Boughton wrote. Whistler took with them infinite pains. He designed the card of invitation, he arranged the table, and he saw that everything placed on it was beautiful: the blue and white he was years in collecting, the silver, the linen, the Japanese bowl of goldfish, or the jar of flowers in the centre. If his own resources failed, he borrowed from Lord Redesdale, two doors off, or, after his brother was married, from Mrs. William Whistler, whose beautiful pieces of Japanese lacquer were his admiration. He prepared the *menu*, partly American, partly French, and wholly bewildering to joint-loving Britons. His buckwheat cakes are not yet forgotten. He would make them himself, if the party were quite informal, and he never spoke again to one man who ventured to dislike them.

Sometimes eighteen or twenty sat down to breakfast, more often half that number. All were people Whistler wanted to meet, people who talked, people who painted, people who



PORTRAIT OF WHISTLER WITH HAT



## THE OPEN DOOR

wrote, people who bought, people who were distinguished, people who were royal, people who were friends. From Mr. Cole, again, we have notes of the company and talk at some of the breakfasts :

“*June 17, 1877.*—To breakfast at J.’s. F. Dicey, young Potter and Huth there. He showed some studies from figures—light and elegant—to be finished.

“*June 29, 1879.*—To Whistler’s for breakfast. Much talk about *Comédie-Française* and Sarah Bernhardt.

“*July 8, 1883.*—Breakfast at W.’s. Lord Houghton, Oscar Wilde, Mrs. Singleton, Mrs. Moncrieff, Mrs. Gerald Potter, Lady Archie Campbell, the Storeys, Theodore Watts, and some others. Mrs. Moncrieff sang well afterwards. Lord Houghton asked me about my father’s memoirs. Margie sat by him.”

The breakfasts remain “charming” in Mrs. Moncrieff’s memory. And “charming” is Lady Colin Campbell’s word; the charm in the blue and white, the old silver, the distinctive little touch Whistler gave to everything. Lady Wolseley writes us that she remembers “a flight of fans fastened up on the walls, and also that the table had a large flat blue China bowl, or dish, with gold-fish and nasturtiums in it.” Mrs. Alan S. Cole recalls a single tall lily springing from the bowl; though invited for twelve, it was wiser, she adds, not to arrive much before two, for to get there earlier was often to hear Whistler splashing in his bath somewhere close to the drawing-room. This was Mr. W. J. Rawlinson’s experience once. He had been asked for twelve, he says, and he got there a few minutes before as he would for a breakfast in Paris. Several guests had already come, others followed, a dozen perhaps; one was Lord Wolseley. For Whistler alone, they waited—and they waited and they waited. At about half-past one, while they were still waiting, they heard a splashing behind the folding-doors. There was a moment of indignation. Then Howell hurried in, beaming on them. “It’s all right, it’s all right!” he said, “Jimmie won’t be  
1874→]

## JAMES McNEILL WHISTLER

long now—he is just having his bath!” Howell talked, and they waited, and two struck before Whistler appeared, smiling, gracious, all in white, for it was hot, and they went down to breakfast. As soon as he came in, he was so fascinating that the waiting was forgotten.

Sir Rennell Rodd writes us of the breakfasts at 13 Tite Street :

“with the inevitable buckwheat cakes, and green corn, and brilliant talk. One I remember particularly, for we happened to be thirteen. There were two Miss C——s present, the youngest of whom died within a week of the breakfast, and an elderly gentleman, whose name I forget, who was there also, when he heard of it at his club, said, ‘God bless my soul,’ and had a stroke and died also.”

J. was once only at one of the Chelsea breakfasts, in 1884, at Tite Street, when Mr. Menpes was present. But ye often breakfasted in Paris, at the Rue du Bac, and in London, at the Fitzroy Street studio. It made no difference who was there, who sat beside you, Whistler dominated everybody and everything, and this was the case not only in his own, but in any and every house where he went. It was one of the many extraordinary things about him that, though short and small, a man of diminutive size the usual description, his was invariably the most commanding presence in a room. When he talked every one listened. At his own table, he had a delightful way of waiting himself upon his guests. He would go round the table with a bottle of some special Burgundy in its cradle, talking all the while, emphasising every point in his talk with a dramatic pause just before or just after filling a glass. We remember one Sunday in Paris, in 1893, Mr. and Mrs. Edwin A. Abbey and Mr. D. S. MacColl the other guests, when he told how he hung the pictures at the annual Liverpool exhibition in 1891 :

“You know, the Academy baby by the dozen had been sent in, and I got them all in my gallery—and in the centre, at one



LADY HADEN



## THE OPEN DOOR

end, I placed the birth of the baby—splendid—and opposite, the baby with the mustard-pot, and opposite that the baby with the puppy—and in the centre, on one side, the baby ill, doctor holding its pulse, mother weeping. On the other, by the door the baby dead—the baby's funeral—baby from the cradle to the grave—baby in heaven—babies of all kinds and shapes all along the line, not crowded, you know, hung with proper respect for the baby. And on varnishing day, in came the artists—each making for his own baby—amazing ! his baby on the line—nothing could be better ! And they all shook my hand, and thanked me—and went to look—at the other men's babies—and then they saw babies in front of them, babies behind them, babies to right of them, babies to left of them. And then—you know—their faces fell—they didn't seem to like it—and—well—ha ha ! they never asked me to hang the pictures again at Liverpool What ! ”

As he told it, he was on his feet, pouring out his Burgundy, minutes sometimes to fill a single glass. There were intervals between one guest and the next ; he seemed never to be in his chair ; it was fully two hours before the story and breakfast came to an end together. But though no one else had a chance to talk, no one was bored. It was the same wherever he went, if the people were sympathetic. If they were not, he could be as grim as anybody, especially if he was expected to “ show off ” ; or, he could go fast asleep. In sympathetic houses, he not only led the talk, but controlled it. There is a legend that he and Mark Twain met for the first time at a dinner, when they simultaneously asked their hostess who that very noisy fellow was ? For there was noise, there was gaiety, and everybody was carried away by it, even the servants.

Whistler was the artist in his use of words and phrases, by their effective repetition making them as inseparable a part of his personality as the white lock and the eyeglass. His sudden “ what,” his familiar “ well, you know,” his eloquent “ H'm ! h'm ! ” were placed as carefully as the

## JAMES McNEILL WHISTLER

Butterfly on his card of invitation, the blue and white on the table. No man was ever so eloquent with his hands, the fingers long, thin, sensitive—"alive to the tips, like the fingers of a mesmerist," Mr. Arthur Symons writes of them. No man ever put so much into words as he into the pause for the laugh, into the laugh itself, the loud, sharp "Ha ha!" from which so many learned to shrink, and into the deliberate adjusting of his eye-glass. So much was in his manner, that it is almost impossible to give an idea of his talk to those who never heard it. We have listened to him with wonder and delight, and then gone away and tried to remember what he said, to find it fall flat and lifeless without the play of his expressive hands, without the malice or the music of his laugh. This is why the stories of him in print often make people marvel at the reputation they have brought him. Not that the talk in itself was not good; it was. His wit was quick, spontaneous. "Providence is very good to me sometimes," he said once when we asked him how he found an answer. He has been compared to Degas, who, it is said, will lead up the talk to a witticism prepared beforehand; Whistler's wit met like a flash the word or the challenge he could not have anticipated. And he loved to tell a story, making more of the best than any other man. He loved gossip, and treated it with a delicacy, a humour that was irresistible. He could be fantastic, malicious, audacious, serious, everything but dull or gross. He shrank from grossness. No one, not his worst enemies, can recall a story from him with a touch or taint of it. The ugly, the unclean, revolted him.

We have heard of Sundays when Whistler sketched the people who were there, hanging these sketches at times in his dining-room. One Sunday he made the dry-point of Lord (then Sir Garnet) Wolseley. Lord Wolseley himself has forgotten it: "I fear beyond the recollection of an agree-

## THE OPEN DOOR

able luncheon at his house at Chelsea, I have no reminiscence," he wrote to us. And Lady Wolseley thinks "Lord Wolseley may have gone to him for sittings early, and have breakfasted with him. I have a vague impression." But Howell, helpful as well as charming, was summoned that Sunday from Putney to amuse the sitter and prevent his hurrying off, and he put the date in his diary :

"*November 24, 1877.*—Went to Whistler's, met Sir Garnet Wolseley. Whistler etched him—got two first proofs, second one touched, 42s. Met Pellegrini and Godwin."

Whistler not only entertained, but also went everywhere, and knew everybody, though he did not allow everybody to know him. When somebody said to him, "The Prince of Wales says he knows you," Whistler's answer was, "That's only his side." He lived at a rate that would have killed most men, and at an expense in details that was fabulous. "I never dined alone for years," he said. If no one was coming to him, if no one had invited him, he dined at a club or a restaurant. He was a familiar figure, at different periods, in the Arts and Hogarth Clubs, the Arundel, the Beaufort Grill Club in Dover Street, or, for supper, at the Beefsteak Club. Many of his letters, for a period, were dated from "The Fielding" in King Street, Covent Garden. He was once put up at the Savile Club, he told us, but heard no more about it, and at the Savage, but that, he said, "is a club to belong to, never to go to." At the Reform Club, had he thought of it, he lost all chances of election one night when his laugh woke up the old gentlemen, whose snores were equally loud, in the reading-room. In the Lindsey Row days he went often to a cheap French restaurant, "good of its kind," with Albert Moore and Homer Martin, a man he delighted in. Many artists dined there, he said, and would sit and talk until late in the evening :

"But then, you know, the sort of Englishman who is entirely  
1874—]

## JAMES McNEILL WHISTLER

outside all these things, and likes to think he is 'in it,' began to come too, and that ruined it."

To Pagani's in Great Portland Street, a tiny place then, he also went with Pellegrini and other friends. He was most often seen at the Café Royal, in the 'eighties, when he dined there with Oscar Wilde, and, towards the end, when Mr. Heinemann, Mr. E. G. Kennedy, and ourselves were most often with him, and when, if he ordered the dinner, you might be sure that *Poulet en Casserole* would be the principal dish, and sweet champagne the wine. Never shall we forget a dinner at the Café Royal, in 1899, to Mr. Freer, who had just bought a picture. We were the other guests, with Mr. Heinemann. Much as Whistler wished to be amiable to Mr. Freer, he was very tired, and, somehow, the dinner was not quite right, and there were scenes in our little corner behind the screen. Mr. Freer felt it necessary to entertain the party, which he did by talking pictures, like a "new critic," and Japanese prints, like a cultured school-ma'am. Whistler slept peacefully through it all, and we tried to be attentive, until at length, at some psychological moment in Hiroshige's life or in Mr. Freer's collection, Whistler snored such a tremendous snore that he woke himself up, crying: "Good Heavens! Who is snoring?"

Whistler had the great fault of being late when invited to dinner. One evening, an official evening, he arrived an hour late. "We are so hungry, Mr. Whistler!" said his host. "What a good sign!" was his answer. At times he felt "like a little devil," and he told us of one of those occasions:

"I arrived. In the middle of the drawing-room table was the new *Fortnightly Review*, wet from the press; in it an article on Méryon by Wedmore, and there was Wedmore—the distinguished guest. I felt the excitement over the great man, and the great things he had been doing. Wedmore took the hostess in to dinner; I was on her other side, seeing things, bent on

## THE OPEN DOOR

making the most of them. And I talked—of critics, of Wedmore, as though I did not know who sat opposite. And I was nudged, my foot kicked under the table. But I talked. And whenever the conversation turned on Méryon, or Wedmore's article, or other serious things, I told another story, and I laughed—ha! ha!—and they couldn't help it, they all laughed with me, and Wedmore was forgotten, and I was the hero of the evening. And Wedmore has never forgiven me."

Whistler went a great deal to the theatre in the 'seventies and 'eighties, and was always seen at first nights. Occasionally, in the 'seventies, as in the 'sixties, he acted in amateur theatricals. He and Mr. Cole, in 1876, played in *Under the Umbrella*, in Kensington Town Hall, and Whistler was "elated" by a paragraph on his performance in the *Daily News*. He showed himself at private views, and at all the ceremonies society approves. To see and be seen was part of the social game, and the world, meeting him everywhere, mistook him for the Butterfly for which he seemed to pose.

## CHAPTER XVI. THE PEACOCK ROOM. THE YEARS EIGHTEEN SEVENTY-FOUR TO EIGHTEEN SEVENTY-SEVEN

FOR a year after Whistler's exhibition in Pall Mall, his pictures were seen nowhere but in his studio. A feeling prevailed among artists that his painting was not serious, because not finished as they understood finish. Whistler retorted that theirs "might be finished, but—well—it never had been begun." This was not the way to curry favour with selecting committees. Probably Royal Academicians were honest, though they were malicious. Lord Redesdale remembers one whose work now is discredited, who used to say that Whistler was losing his eyesight, that he could not see there was no paint on his canvas. Mr. G. A. Holmes has told us that a few artists in Chelsea, though they disliked him personally, thought he was a man with new ideas, character, originality, one who threw new light on art; Henry Moore said to Mr. Holmes that Whistler put more atmosphere into his pictures than any man living. But Academicians, as a rule, were afraid of him, so much so that Whistler would say to Mr. Holmes: "Well, you know, they want to treat me like a sheet of note-paper, and crumple me up!"

His prints at this time appeared in exhibitions, because many were in the fine collection of etchings which Mr. Anderson Rose lent to the Liverpool Art Club in October 1874, and a few months afterwards to the Hartley Institution at Southampton. Shortly before the Liverpool show opened, Mr. Ralph Thomas'

## THE PEACOCK ROOM

*Catalogue*, the first of Whistler's etchings, was privately published by John Russell Smith of Soho Square. Of the fifty copies printed, only twenty-five were for sale, so that it became at once rare. Mr. Percy Thomas etched Whistler's portrait of himself (Mr. McCulloch's) for the frontispiece, Mr. Ralph Thomas, who described the plates, had been with Whistler when many were made and printed, and it must always be regretted that Mr. Wedmore did not retain his titles. In 1875, Whistler again exhibited pictures in the few galleries that found a place for him when the Academy could not. In October he sent to the Winter Exhibition at the Dudley Gallery a *Nocturne in Blue and Gold, No. III.*, which the name makes difficult to identify, and *Nocturne in Black and Gold—The Falling Rocket*, which Ruskin, presently was to identify beyond the possibility of doubt: the impression of fireworks that filled the night with beauty for Whistler in the gardens of Cremorne. At the Dudley, it created no sensation. F. G. Stephens, in the *Athenæum*, was almost alone in his praise. A month later, November 1875, *Chelsea Reach—Harmony in Grey*, and many studies of figures on brown paper were at the Winter Exhibition of the Society of French Artists, and three Nocturnes in the Spring Exhibition (1876) of the same Society. Thus Whistler managed without the Royal Academy.

In the studio there were new portraits. When Irving appeared as Philip II. in 1874, Whistler was struck with the tall, slim, romantic figure in silvery greys and blacks, and got Irving to pose. Mr. Bernhard Sickert thinks it extraordinary that Whistler failed to suggest Irving's character. We think it more extraordinary for Mr. Sickert to be unaware that Whistler was painting Irving made up as Philip II. and not as Henry Irving. When Mr. Alan S. Cole saw the picture at the studio, on May 5, 1876, he found Whistler "quite madly enthusiastic about his power of  
1876]

## JAMES McNEILL WHISTLER

painting such full-lengths in two sittings or so." The reproduction in M. Duret's *Whistler* differs in so many details from the picture as it is, that we wondered if two portraits were painted. M. Duret tells us that his reproduction is from a photograph lent him by Mr. George Lucas, to whom Whistler gave it. Probably, M. Duret writes, the photograph was taken while Whistler was painting the picture, and afterwards, in working, he altered it. On comparing the photograph to the picture, we do not think there were two portraits, but there are many changes. In the photograph, the cloak is thrown back over the actor's right shoulder, showing his arm. In the exhibited picture, his arm is hidden by the cloak and his hand, which before seems to have been thrust into his doublet, now rests upon the collar of an order. The trunks apparently were much altered, especially the right, and the legs are far better drawn, the left foot being entirely repainted. Though Whistler was acquiring more certainty in putting in these big portraits at once, he was becoming more and more exacting and made repeated changes. The portrait was not a commission. It is said that Irving refused the small price Whistler asked for it, but later, seeing his legs sticking out from under a pile of canvases in a Wardour Street shop, recognised them, and bought the picture for ten guineas. Mr. Bram Stoker writes that, at the time of the bankruptcy, Whistler sold it to Irving "for either twenty or forty pounds—I forget which." The facts are that Whistler sold the *Irving* to Howell, for "ten pounds and a sealskin coat," Howell recorded in his diary, and that from him it passed into the hands of Mr. Graves, the printseller in Pall Mall, who sold it to Irving for one hundred pounds. After Irving's death, it came up for sale at Christie's, and fetched five thousand pounds, becoming the property of Mr. Thomas of Philadelphia.

A portrait of Sir Henry Cole was begun this spring. Mr.



SKETCHES OF THE PEACOCK ROOM  
(Pen and Ink)



## THE PEACOCK ROOM

Alan S. Cole, in his diary (May 19, 1876) speaks of "a strong commencement upon a nearly life-size portrait of my father. Looking at it reflected in glass, and how the figure stood within the frame." This was never finished. Whistler's executrix says it was burned.

Lord Redesdale tells us of a beautiful full-length of his wife in draperies of Chinese blue silk Whistler called "fair," which was his word then for everything he liked. With two or three more sittings, and a little work, it would have been finished. But it was a difficult moment, men were in possession at No. 2 Lindsey Row, and, rather than risk its falling into their hands, he slashed the canvas to pieces. The debt was small, some thirty pounds or so, and the price agreed upon for the portrait was two hundred guineas. Lord Redesdale or any thero friend, would gladly have settled the matter, but Whistler said nothing. A portrait started of Lord Redesdale, in Van Dyck costume, and several *Nocturnes* went, he says, the same way. *The Fur Jacket*, *Rosa Corder*, *Connie Gilchrist with the Skipping Rope*—*The Gold Girl*, *Effie Deans*, were also painted, or at least begun. *The Fur Jacket*, *Arrangement in Black and Brown* his final name for it in the exhibition at Goupil's in 1892, is the portrait of "Maud," Miss Franklin, who, from now on, becomes more important in his life and in his art. It is one of great dignity. The dress is put in with a full sweeping brush in long flowing lines, almost classic in the fall of its folds; the pale beautiful face looks out, like a flower, from the depths of the background. In many portraits Whistler was rebuked for sacrificing the face to the design; here, the interest is concentrated in the face, and that is why the "shadowy figure" has been criticised as a mere ghost, a mere "rub-in of colour," on the canvas. That he had carried it as far as he thought it should be carried to obtain his effect, is the more certain when it is contrasted with *Rosa Corder*, also an *Arrangement* 1876]

## JAMES McNEILL WHISTLER

in *Black and Brown*, in which the jacket, the feathered hat held, drooping, in one hand, the trailing skirt, even the fine face in its severe profile, are more solidly modelled. M. Blanche, in an article on Whistler in the *Renaissance Latine* (June 15, 1905), wrote that once Whistler, in Cheyne Walk, saw Miss Rosa Corder, in her brown dress, pass a door painted black, and was struck with the effect of colour. This may be true, for, as we have shown, Whistler often got the first idea of a pose, an arrangement, by mere chance. *Connie Gilchrist, the Gold Girl*, at the moment the most popular little dancer at the Gaiety, attracted Whistler by her stage dress, which revealed her slight girlish form in its delicate, youthful beauty. Whistler posed her in the studio as he had seen her on the stage, in the act of skipping. But the movement does not seem part of the decorative arrangement on his canvas. It told on the stage by its simplicity, its spontaneity, but it becomes in the picture theatrical, artificial. The figure has the elegance of the little pastels, it is placed with the distinction of the *Miss Alexander*, but the suspended action gives the sense of incompleteness which his critics were so unnecessarily conscious of in his technique. A long line swept down the outline of the figure shows that he meant to change it. The pose and the movement haunted him. Often, in friends' houses, he would make little sketches of pictures he was working on, and one evening he left with Mr. Cole sketches both of the *Connie Gilchrist* and the *Rosa Corder* done in this way.

Not one of these portraits was shown in 1876, for other work gradually engrossed him to the exclusion of everything else. It was the year of the Peacock Room.

He first proposed the scheme to Mr. W. C. Alexander, when he designed the decorations for the house on Campden Hill, and he put down a few notes in pen and ink. But the work went no further, and he arranged, instead, a harmony in

## THE PEACOCK ROOM

white for the drawing-room, replaced afterwards by an arrangement of Eastern tapestries. The scheme was still a suggestion on note-paper, when Mr. Leyland bought his house in Prince's Gate. Leyland's ambition, it is said, was to live the life of an ancient Venetian merchant in modern London, and he began to remodel the interior and to "fill it with beautiful things." He bought the gilded staircase from Northumberland House, recently pulled down to make way for Northumberland Avenue. He got Whistler to design the colour in the hall, and paint the detail of blossom and leaf in some of the panels of the dado. "To Leyland's house to see Whistler's colouring of Hall—very delicate cocoa-colour and gold—successful," Mr. Cole wrote in his diary on March 24. Leyland covered the walls of drawing- and reception-rooms with pictures, his instinctive preference for the best guiding him in their selection. He had fine works by Filippo Lippi, Botticelli, Crivelli. He owned, among other things, Rossetti's *Blessed Damosel* and *Lady Lilith*, Millais' *Eve of St. Agnes*, Ford Madox Brown's *Chaucer at King Edward's Court*, Windus' *Burd Helen*, Burne-Jones' *Mirror of Venus* and *Wine of Circe*. He bought work by Legros, Watts and Albert Moore. Whistler's *Princesse du Pays de la Porcelaine* was already his, and he hung it in his dining-room with his splendid collection of blue and white.

Mr. Norman Shaw was making the alterations in the house for Leyland, and another architect, Jeckyll, was suggested by Mr. Murray Marks for the decoration of the dining-room and the arrangement of the blue and white. Some say the original scheme was that Morris and Burne-Jones should decorate and furnish the dining-room, though when Whistler stepped in, they vanished. The commission was certainly given to Jeckyll, and he put up a series of walnut shelves to hold the china. Whistler designed the side-board. A space was left over the mantel for the *Princesse* and another

1876]

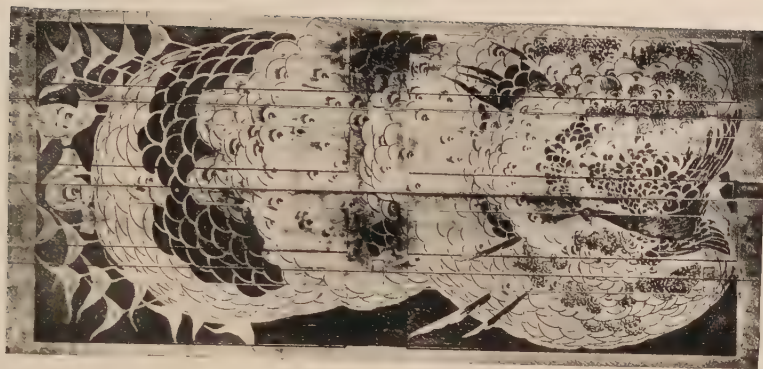
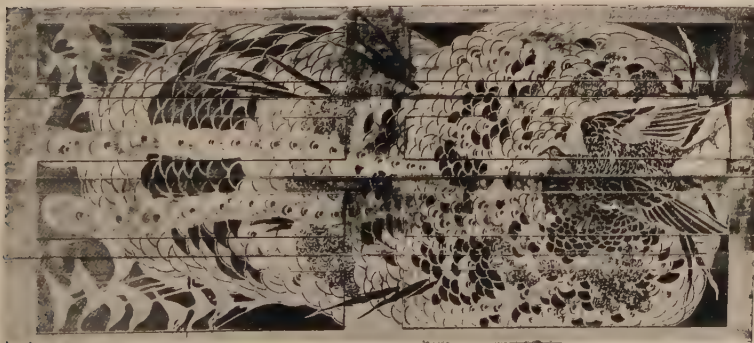
## JAMES McNEILL WHISTLER

at the opposite end of the room, for paintings by Burne-Jones and Whistler, who wished the *Three Figures*, *Pink and Grey* to hang there and face the *Princesse*. The walls were hung with Norwich leather. The shelves were divided by rigid perpendicular lines endlessly repeated, and the panelled ceiling, with its pendant lamps, was heavy and oppressive. Whistler objected that the red border of the rug, and the red flowers in the centre of each panel of the leather, which was painted, not embossed, killed the delicate tones of his picture. Leyland agreed with him. The red border was cut off the rug, and Whistler gilded, or painted, the flowers on the leather with yellow and gold. The result he pronounced horrible; the yellow paint and gilding "swore" at the yellow tone of the leather. Something else must be done, and again Leyland agreed. The something else developed into the scheme of decoration first submitted to Mr. Alexander: the Peacock Room.

He told us one evening, when talking of it:

"Well, you know, I just painted as I went on, without design or sketch—it grew as I painted. And towards the end I reached such a point of perfection—putting in every touch with such freedom—that when I came round to the corner where I had started, why, I had to paint part of it over again, or the difference would have been too marked. And the harmony in blue and gold developing, you know, I forgot everything in my joy in it!"

He had planned a journey to Venice, and new series of etchings to be made there and in France and Holland. The journey was postponed. At the end of the season, the Leylands went to Speke Hall. Whistler remained at Prince's Gate. Town emptied, and he was still there, spending his days on ladders and scaffolding, lying in a hammock, painting with a brush fastened to a fishing-rod. His two pupils helped him: "We laid on the gold," Mr. Walter Greaves says, and there were times when the three were found with



THE PEACOCK ROOM



## THE PEACOCK ROOM

their hair and faces covered with gold. Whistler's description of this whirlwind of work was "the show's afire," an expression he used for years when things were "going." He was up every morning before six, and at Prince's Gate an hour or so after; at noon, jumping into a hansom and driving home to lunch; then hurrying back to his work. At night, he was fit for nothing but bed, "so full were my eyes of sleep and peacock feathers," he told us. He thought only of the beauty springing up beneath his hands. Autumn set in. Lionel Robinson and Sir Thomas Sutherland, the friends with whom he was to have gone to Venice, at last started without him. He could not drop the work at Prince's Gate.

A record of his progress is contained in the short, concise notes of Mr. Alan S. Cole's diary:

"September 11, 1876.—Whistler dined. Most entertaining with his brilliant description of his successful decorations at Leyland's.

"September 20.—To see Peacock Room. Peacock feather devices—blues and golds—extremely new and original.

"October 26.—To see room, which is developing. The dado and panels greatly help it. Met Poynter, who spoke highly of Whistler's decoration.

"October 27.—Again to see room with Moody. He did not like the varnished surface and blocky manner of laying on the gold.

"October 29.—To Peacock Room. Mitford [Lord Redesdale] came.

"November 10.—The blue over the brown (leather) background is most admirable in effect, and the ornament in gold on blue fine. W. quite mad with excitement.

"November 20.—With Prince Teck to see Whistler and the Room. Left P. T. with Jimmy.

"November 29.—Golden Peacocks promise to be superb.

"December 4.—Peacocks superb.

"December 8.—Article in *Morning Post* on Peacock Room.

"December 9.—Whistler in a state over article in *Morning Post*. Leyland much perturbed as I heard.

## JAMES McNEILL WHISTLER

"December 15.—Whistler now thinking of cutting off the pendant ceiling lamps in Peacock Room.

"December 17.—My father and Probyn to see room. Jimmy much disgusted at my father's telling him that, in taking so much pains over his work, and in the minuteness of his etched work, he really was like Mulready, who was equally scrupulous."

Lord Redesdale tells us that he had just returned from Scotland, and had seen nothing of the long summer's work. When he went to Prince's Gate Whistler was on top of a ladder, looking like a little evil imp, a gnome.

"But what are you doing?"

"I am doing the loveliest thing you ever saw!"

"But what of the beautiful old Spanish leather? And Leyland? Have you consulted him?"

"Why should I? I am doing the most beautiful thing that ever has been done, you know—the most beautiful room!"

Everybody hurried to look at it, and Whistler began to hold a succession of informal receptions at Prince's Gate. He was pleased when people like the Princess Louise and the Marquis of Westminster came, he wrote to his mother at Hastings, for they set the fashion, kept up the talk in London. Boughton said in his *Reminiscences* :

"He often asked me round to the Peacock Room, and I see him still up on high, lying on his back often, working in 'gold on blue' and 'blue on gold' over the whole expanse of the ceiling—and as far as I could see he let no hand touch it but his own."

Mrs. Stillman, however, remembers the two pupils working hard while she drank tea with Whistler. Mrs. Richmond Ritchie has let us have her impressions of her visit :

"Long, long after the Paris days, Mr. Whistler danced when I would rather have talked. Some one, I cannot remember who, it was probably one of Mr. Cole's family, told me one day when I was walking up Prince's Gate that he was decorating a

## THE PEACOCK ROOM

house by which we were passing—and asked me if I should like to go in. We found ourselves, it was like a dream, in a beautiful Peacock Room, full of lovely lights and tints, and romantic, dazzling effects. James Whistler, in a painter's smock, stood at one end of the room at work. Seeing us, he laid down his mahl-stick and brush, and greeted us warmly, and I talked of old Paris days to him. 'I used to ask you to dance,' he said, 'but you liked talking best,' to which I answered, 'No, indeed, I liked dancing best'—and suddenly I found myself whirling half-way down the room."

Jeekyll also came, and his visit had a tragic end. When he saw what had been done with his work, he hurried home, gilded his floor, and forgot his grief in a mad-house.

Whistler received the critics on February 9, 1877. "Called and found Whistler elated with the praises of the press of the Peacock Room," is Mr. Cole's note on the 18th of the month. Even then it was not finished. On March 5, Mr. Cole was "late at Prince's Gate with Whistler, consoling him. He trying to finish the peacocks on shutters—with him till 2 A.M., and walked home."

Whistler made no change in the architectural construction of the room. It was far from beautiful, with its repeated lines, its heavy ceiling, its hanging lamps, and its spaces so broken up that, only on the wall opposite the *Princesse* and on the shutters, could he carry out his design in its full splendour and stateliness, and give gorgeousness of form as well as colour: only there could he paint the peacocks that were his motive, so that it is by artificial light, with the shutters closed, that the room is seen in completeness. He could do no more than adapt in the most marvellous fashion the eye of the peacock, the throat and breast feathers to the broken surfaces. But in spite of all the drawbacks, the Peacock Room is the "noble work" he called it to his mother, the one perfect mural decoration of modern times. It was his first chance, and it will be a lasting reproach to 1877]

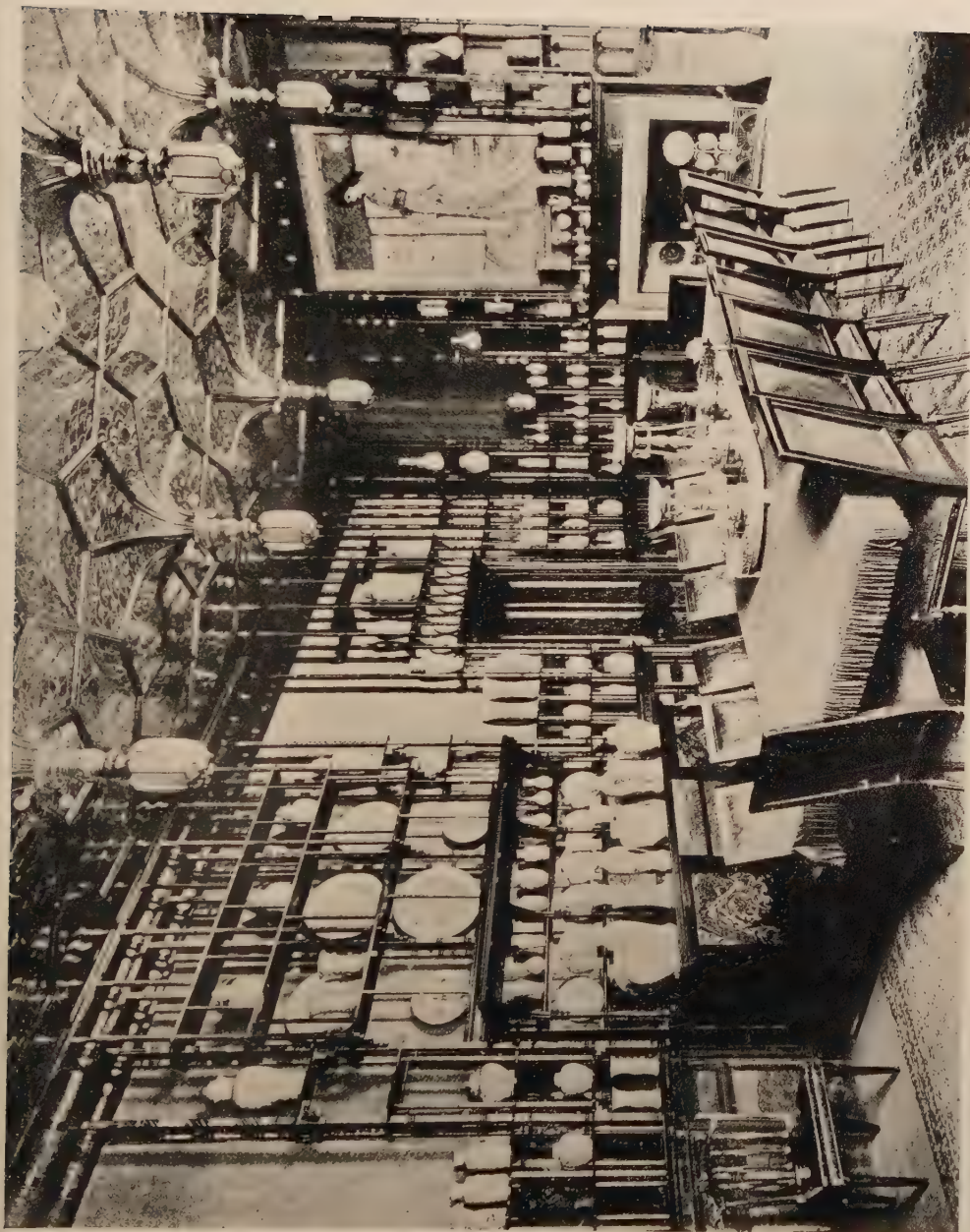
## JAMES MCNEILL WHISTLER

his contemporaries that there was no one to offer him another until it was too late.

A little leaflet, for distribution among the critics, was written, it is said, by Whistler, though the wording does not suggest it, and printed by Mr. Thomas Way. We have seen only one copy, Lady Haden's. It explains that, with the Peacocks as motive, two patterns, derived from the eyes and the breast feathers, were invented and repeated throughout, sometimes one alone, sometimes both in combination; along the dado, blue on gold, over the walls gold on blue; while the arrangement was completed by the birds, painted in all their splendour, in blue on the gold shutters, in gold on the blue space opposite the chimney place.

Whistler, who, in his pictures, avoided literary themes, resorted to symbolism in his gold peacocks on the wall facing the *Princesse*. One, standing amid flying feathers and gold, clutches in his claws a pile of coins; the other bristles and spreads his wings in angry but triumphant defiance: "the Rich Peacock and the Poor Peacock," Whistler said, symbolising the relations between patron and artist.

Leyland had been kept out of his house in Prince's Gate for months. He had seen his beautiful old leather disappear beneath Whistler's blue and gold. He had heard of receptions and press views in his house for which no invitations had been issued by him or to him, and he was annoyed at having his house turned into a public gallery. The crisis came when Whistler, thinking himself justified by months of work, asked two thousand guineas for the decoration of the room, as a reasonable price. Leyland, who had sanctioned only the re-touching of the leather, could restrain himself no longer. Like many generous men, he had a strict, if narrow, sense of justice. The original understanding was that Whistler should receive five hundred guineas. This grew to a thousand as the scheme developed. Leyland



THE PEACOCK ROOM



## THE PEACOCK ROOM

agreed. But when, at the end, Whistler demanded two thousand, and there was no contract, Leyland sent Whistler one thousand pounds, not even making them guineas. To Whistler, this was an insult. He felt he had been treated, not as an artist, but as a tradesman, and the years of friendship counted for nothing. He never forgave Leyland, though it seems that, at one moment, Leyland was prepared to pay the sum asked, if Whistler would leave the house. Whistler refused, preferring to make Leyland a gift of the decoration than not finish the panel of the Peacocks.

“You know—there Leyland will sit at dinner—his back to the *Princesse*, and always before him the apotheosis of *l'art et l'argent* !”

And this was what happened. Leyland knew that, in return for the loss of his leather and his irritation with Whistler, he had been given something beautiful, and he kept the dining-room as Whistler left it, toning down not a flying feather, not a piece of gold in that triumphant caricature. Until the colour fades from the panel, the world cannot forget the quarrel. Whistler himself never forgot it, and his resentment against Leyland never lessened. It may be that he was over-sensitive, certainly he put himself in the wrong by his conduct to Leyland. But he could no more help his manner of avenging what he thought an insult, than the meek man can refrain from turning the other cheek to the chastiser. It will ever be to Leyland's credit that he left the work intact, and sat there, and admired it ungrudgingly.

## CHAPTER XVII. THE GROSVENOR GALLERY. THE YEARS EIGHTEEN SEVENTY-SEVEN TO EIGHTEEN SEVENTY-EIGHT.

MANY exhibitions had been organised in opposition to the Royal Academy, but on too insignificant a scale to contend against a rich and powerful institution. Sir Coutts Lindsay, the founder of the Grosvenor Gallery, brought to the new enterprise, money, a talent for organisation, and a determination to show the best work in the most beautiful manner possible. Nothing could have been more in accord with Whistler's ideas. He dropped in to smoke with Mr. Alan S. Cole on the evening of March 19, 1876, when, Mr. Cole writes, he "was in great excitement over Sir Coutts Lindsay's gallery for pictures—very select exhibition, which he carried to an extreme by saying that it might be opened with only one picture worthy of being shown that season." The Grosvenor never reached any such height of disinterestedness. Sir Coutts Lindsay proposed to maintain his standard by exhibiting no pictures except those invited by himself, and he might have succeeded had he had the strength to ignore the Academy, and make the Grosvenor as distinct from it as was the International Society of Sculptors, Painters, and Gravers under Whistler's presidency. He had, what then seemed, the daring to invite Whistler, Rossetti, Burne-Jones, Holman Hunt, Walter Crane; but he could not venture to leave out Watts, Millais, Alma-Tadema, Poynter. "To those whose work he specially wanted, he gave little dinners,"

## THE GROSVENOR GALLERY

Mr. Hallé has told us, and a very strange lot some of them seemed. The butler felt this even more. He stood them all, until one evening he could endure it no longer, and he came in the drawing-room, where they were, and whispered : " There's a gent downstairs says he has come to dinner, wot's forgot his necktie and stuck a feather in his 'air," for at this period, Whistler, Mr. Hallé says, never wore a necktie when in evening dress. The white lock bewildered many. Mrs. Leyland remembers his going with her to her box at the opera once, where the attendant leaned over and said : " Beg your pardon, sir, but there's a white feather in your hair, just on top ! "

At first, Burne-Jones and the followers of the Pre-Raphaelites were most in evidence at Sir Coutts Lindsay's exhibitions, and the " greenery-yallery, Grosvenor Gallery," element, parodied by Gilbert and Sullivan, and so many others, prevailed. But the Grosvenor, by the time its traditions were taken over by the New Gallery, had dwindled into little more than an overflow from the Academy.

Shortly before the first exhibition in 1877, Whistler's brother, the Doctor, was married to Miss Helen Ionides, a cousin of his old friends, Aleco and Luke Ionides. The wedding (April 17, 1877) was at St. George's, Hanover Square, and the Greek Church, London Wall. It brought to Whistler a good friend for the troubled years that were to come, and Mrs. Whistler's house in Wimpole Street was for long a home to him.

The first Grosvenor was a loan exhibition, and opened in May 1877. Whistler lent *Nocturne in Black and Gold—The Falling Rocket*, hung the year before at the Dudley ; *Harmony in Amber and Black*, the first title of *The Fur Jacket* ; *Arrangement in Brown* ; Irving as Philip II. of Spain, with the title *Arrangement in Black, No. III.* From Mrs. Leyland came *Nocturne in Blue and Silver*, the river and Battersea seen 1877]

## JAMES McNEILL WHISTLER

from the windows of Lindsey Row ; from Mr. W. Graham, another *Nocturne in Blue and Silver*—changed later by Whistler to *Blue and Gold*—*Old Battersea Bridge*, now at the Tate Gallery ; from the Hon. Mrs. Percy Wyndham, *Nocturne in Blue and Gold*, at Westminster. The *Carlyle* was shown, though it arrived too late to be catalogued. To this exhibition, Boehm sent his bust of Whistler in terra-cotta, done in 1872, considered at the time an extremely good portrait.

Whistler's work was also seen in a frieze, described by Mr. Walter Crane :

“ Whistler designed the frieze—the phases of the moon, on the coved ceiling of the West Gallery which has disappeared since its conversion into the Æolian Hall, with stars on a subdued blue ground, the moon and stars being brought out in silver, the frieze being divided into panels by the supports of the glass roof. The ‘ phases ’ were sufficiently separated from each other.”

We have heard of this decoration from no one else. Probably it was overshadowed by the gorgeousness of the crimson silk damask and green velvet hangings, the gilded pilasters and furniture, the monumental fireplace, of which complaint was heard from every side. The sumptuousness of Sir Coutts Lindsay's background was disastrous to the pictures. Whistler's suffered less than others, but were not liked the more on that account. Before the private view (April 30, 1877), Sir Coutts Lindsay had expressed his disappointment in the *Irving* and the *Nocturnes*. The crowd gathered in front of Alma-Tadema's *Bath* ; Burne-Jones' *Days of Creation* ; Watts' *Love and Death* ; Millais' portraits ; Holman Hunt's *Afterglow*—in front of Leighton, Poynter, Richmond, Walter Crane, Albert Moore. The critics sneered at Whistler, or patronised him, as usual. The *Athenæum* seemed to grudge its meagre lines to this “ whimsical, if

## THE GROSVENOR GALLERY

capable, artist and his vagaries." The *Times* smiled with condescension at "Mr. Whistler's compartment musical with strange Nocturnes," wondered how Irving enjoyed "being reduced to a mere arrangement," and deplored the theory that, in practice, covered

"an entire absence of details, even details generally considered so important to a full-length portrait as arms and legs. In fact, Mr. Whistler's full-length arrangements suggest to us a choice between materialised spirits and figures in a London fog."

But nowhere was criticism so insolent, nowhere so brutal, as in the notice of the Grosvenor which Ruskin delivered from his circulating pulpit, *Fors Clavigera* (July 2, 1877).

Ruskin, though social subjects engrossed him more and more, was still the art critic, all powerful to the public, and to himself infallible. He had made the Pre-Raphaelites, he set to work to unmake Whistler. Already Ruskin was attacked by the mental malady, the "morbid excitement," in Mr. Collingwood's words, that obscured the last years of his life; he had been very ill in the winter of 1877. Nothing else could pardon his malice and insolence. He looked at *The Falling Rocket*, and was blind to the beauty and to the mastery of the painter.

"I have seen and heard much of cockney impudence before now, but never expected to hear a coxcomb ask two hundred guineas for flinging a pot of paint in the public's face."

Boughton, in his *Reminiscences*, tells that Whistler first chanced upon this criticism when they were alone together in the smoking-room at the Arts Club. "It is the most debased *style* of criticism I have had thrown at me yet," Whistler said. "Sounds rather like libel," Boughton suggested. "Well—that I shall try to find out!" Whistler replied.

Till now, his answer to abuse of his work had been the  
1877]

lash of his wit. But if critics had tried him by their stupidity, never, before Ruskin, had they outraged him by their venom. The insult was made in a widely read print; he therefore sought redress in the most public fashion possible in England and sued Ruskin for libel.

The immediate result was that he found it harder than ever to sell his pictures. To buy his *Nocturnes* was to be laughed at, Mr. Rawlinson, one of the few who risked it, assures us. Whistler put away the new anxiety as he put away all his troubles; he laughed and he worked, and devoted a great deal of time to black-and-white. The year before he had announced his intention to take up etching again. He had hoped, at last, to go to Venice, but the preparations for the trial kept him in London. Howell now made himself as useful to Whistler as he had been to Rossetti, and the friendship between them became close intimacy.

“Well, you know—it happened one summer evening in those old days when there was real summer, I was sitting looking out of the window in Lindsey Row, and there was Howell passing, and Miss Rosa Corder was with him. And I called to them, and they came in, and Howell said: ‘Why, you have etched many plates, haven’t you? You must get them out, you must print them, you must let me see to them—there’s gold waiting. And you have a press!’ And so I had, in a room upstairs, only it was rusty, it hadn’t been used for so long. But Howell wouldn’t listen to an objection. He said he would fix up the press, he would pull it. And there was no escape. And the next morning, there we all were, Miss Rosa Corder too, and Howell was pulling at the wheel, and there were basins of water, and paper being damped, and prints being dried, and then Howell was grinding more ink, and, with the plates under my fingers, I felt all the old love of it come back. In the afternoon Howell would go and see Mr. Graves, the printseller, and there were orders flying about, and cheques—it was all amazing, you know! Howell profited, of course. But he was so superb. One evening we had left a pile of eleven prints just pulled, and the next morning

## THE GROSVENOR GALLERY

only five were there. 'It's very strange!' Howell said, 'we must have a search. No one could have taken them but me, and that, you know, is impossible!'

New plates, *Free Trade Wharf*, *Putney Bridge* and *The Little Putney* were published by the Fine Art Society. *St. James's Street* was reproduced by lithography in the "Season Number" of *Vanity Fair*, 1878, and the *Athenæum* objected to it because it was "not done as Leech or Hogarth would have done it," and the *World* mistook the reproduction for the original, and so invited from Whistler one of the letters now following each other fast: "Atlas has the wisdom of ages, and need not grieve himself with mere matters of art." *Adam and Eve*, *Old Chelsea* has a special interest, for it marks better than almost any plate, the transition from his early manner in the *Thames Set* to the later handling in the Venetian. A plate was made from the *Irving as Philip of Spain*, the only one of his portraits that Whistler reproduced on copper, and he did it very badly. His plates of "Joe" and "Maud" were never done after finished pictures, but many were made as studies for pictures he proposed to paint. The dry-point of Whistler's *Mother* has no relation to the portrait. He was bored to death with copying himself, he would say, and, twenty years afterwards, when he undertook to make a lithograph of his *Montesquiou*, and failed, he said that "it was impossible to produce the same masterpiece twice over," that "the inspiration would not come," that when he was not working at a new thing from Nature, he was not applying himself, "it was as difficult as for a hen to lay the same egg twice."

In 1878 he made his first experiments in lithography. His attention had been called to it by Mr. Thomas Way, who did more than any other man to revive the art in England. Lithography, appropriated by commerce, was almost forgotten as a means of artistic expression. In France, it was

## JAMES McNEILL WHISTLER

given over for cheaper and quicker methods of illustration, and in England it was overweighted by the ponderous performances of Haghe and Nash, and hedged about by trade-unions, reduced to the perfection of commonplace. Lithographers here and there preserved its best traditions, and regretted the degradation. Mr. Thomas Way determined to interest artists again in a medium that had yielded such splendid results. He prepared stones for them, explained processes, and would not hear of difficulties. Some artists experimented, but lithography did not pay, while the anecdote in paint fetched a fortune. Mr. Way knew Whistler, had printed the leaflet on the Peacock Room, and had bought some of his work. And Mr. Way appealed to Whistler, who tried the stone, grasped at once its possibilities, and was delighted. In his first five lithographs he did things never attempted before, and found the medium peculiarly adapted to him. There were nine in all this year. They were drawn on the stone, though most of the later ones were done on lithographic paper. He proposed to publish these first lithographs as *Art Notes*, but there was no demand, and the plan fell through. *The Toilet* and *The Broad Bridge* were printed in *Piccadilly*, edited by Mr. Watts-Dunton, and they had hardly appeared when the magazine came to an end. Neither Whistler nor lithography then meant success for any enterprise.

In 1878, the *Catalogue of Blue and White Nankin Porcelain Forming the Collection of Sir Henry Thompson* was published. Mr. Murray Marks and Mr. W. C. Alexander own delicate little studies of blue and white, designed by Whistler for Mr. Marks, but never used. They were a good preparation for the drawings which, in collaboration with Sir Henry Thompson, he made to illustrate the *Catalogue*. Some were in brown, some in blue, reproduced by the Autotype Company. Nineteen out of the twenty-six are by Whistler. They are



avec six marques.

avec six marques.



N<sup>o</sup> 5.



N<sup>o</sup> 6.

SKETCHES FOR BLUE AND WHITE CHINA  
(Wash)



## THE GROSVENOR GALLERY

of the utmost simplicity and directness, and the modelling is entirely in the drawing by the brush, exactly as the Japanese would have done it. As a rule, there are neither shadows nor any attempt at relief. The series is the complete refutation of the assertion that he could not draw. Whenever he attempted drawings of this sort, or etchings like *The Wine Glass*, he eclipsed Jacquemart, and, indeed, all his contemporaries. Worried, anxious, the libel case hanging over him, his debts increasing, the general distrust in his work growing, Whistler, nevertheless, gave to the catalogue his usual care. We have seen another set of the drawings, which differ slightly from those reproduced, and with which, evidently, he was not satisfied. The book was edited by Mr. Murray Marks, and issued by Messrs. Ellis and White of New Bond Street, in May, and Mr. Marks exhibited the drawings and the porcelain, with the book, in his shop, 395 Oxford Street. The show was not a success, the book was a loss, though only two hundred and twenty copies were printed.

Of personal notice, Whistler now had more than enough. He was caricatured this year in the farce of *The Grasshopper* at the Gaiety—it was in the days of Edward Terry and Nellie Farren; he was caricatured in *Vanity Fair* by “Spy,” Leslie Ward, then rapidly rivalling “Ape” in popularity; and to be so caricatured was, in London, to achieve notoriety.

To the second Grosvenor in 1878, he sent, in defiance of Ruskin, another series of Nocturnes, Harmonies and Arrangements. Among them was the *Arrangement in White and Black, No. I.*, the large full-length portrait of Miss Maud Franklin, that sometimes figures in catalogues and articles as *L'Américaine*. We believe this picture was never shown in England again. It passed in the early 'eighties into the collection of Dr. Linde at Lübeck, where it remained until 1904, was then sold, through Paris dealers, to an American, and remains one of the least known of Whistler's large full-

1878]

## JAMES McNEILL WHISTLER

lengths. We saw it in the spring of 1904, when it hung for a while in M. Duret's apartment in the Rue Vignon. It is the only portrait, except the *Connie Gilchrist* and *The Yellow Buskin*, in which Whistler attempted to give movement to the figure. Miss Franklin wears a white gown in the ugly fashion of the late 'seventies, and walks towards you, one hand on her hip, the other holding up her skirt, the rhythm and spring of the movement expressed in every line of the body, every fold of the gown. But, because she comes towards you, she fails to fulfil Whistler's own precept that the figure must keep well within the frame. She seems walking out of the dark depth of the background, breaking through the envelope of atmosphere. The problem was difficult, an unusual one for Whistler, and, interesting as is the result, the portrait hardly ranks with the greatest. When shown in 1878, it did not help to reconcile the critics. The *Athenæum* said :

"Mr. Whistler is in great force. Last year some of his life-size portraits were without feet ; here we have a curiously shaped young lady, ostentatiously showing her foot, which is a pretty large one."

It was a "vaporious full-length" in the opinion of the *Times*, still babbling nonsense about the Nocturnes, and glad to turn from Whistler's "diet of fog to the broad table of substantial landscape spread for us by Cecil G. Lawson." Whistler made a drawing of the *Arrangement in White and Black* for Blackburn's *Grosvenor Notes*, an illustrated catalogue, published for the first time in 1878. For many years, after this, Whistler made these little sketches in pen and ink after his pictures, for catalogues, and also for papers that illustrated their notices of the exhibitions : an aid to the identification of works where his titles failed.

## CHAPTER XVIII. THE WHITE HOUSE. THE YEAR EIGHTEEN SEVENTY-EIGHT

IN the Paris Universal Exhibition of 1878, Whistler showed the section of a room decorated by him, his only exhibit. We never knew of this until after his death. It may have been the design he wanted to carry out for Mr. Alexander; most likely, it was intended for the decoration of the White House, which E. W. Godwin, the architect, was building for him in Tite Street, Chelsea. The only reference to it that we have found is in the *American Architect and Building News* (July 27, 1878):

“ Ever since the Baltimore artist, Mr. Whistler, did the famous Peacock Room for Mr. Leyland in Prince’s Gate, he has had a reputation as unique in upholstery as in higher walks of art. He is building a house for himself in London; like no other house, of course; meant, perhaps, as a protest against the sudden popularity of Queen Anne fronts in red brick, with their balconies and drawbridges. He calls this room a Harmony in Yellow and Gold. Outside a yellow wall is built up a chimney-piece and cabinet in one, of which the wood, like all the wood in the room, is a curiously light yellow mahogany—something very different from the flaming veneer known to the American for generations past, with drunk and straddling patterns all over it. The fireplace is flush with the front of the cabinet, the front panelled in gilt bars below the shelf and cornice, inclosing tiles of pale sulphur, above the shelf, a cupboard, with clear glass and triangular open niches at either side, holding bits of Kaga porcelain, chosen for the yellowishness of the red, which is a characteristic of that ware; the frame of the grate brass; the rails in polished steel; the fender the same. Yellow on yellow, gold on gold, everywhere. The peacock reappears, the eyes and the breast

1878] 219

## JAMES McNEILL WHISTLER

feathers of him, but whereas in Prince's gate it was always blue on gold, or gold on blue, here the feather is all gold, boldly and softly laid on a gold-tinted wall. The feet to the table-legs are tipped with brass, and rest on a yellowish brown velvet rug. Chairs and sofas are covered with yellow, pure rich yellow velvet, darker in shade than the yellow of the wall, and edged with yellow fringe. The framework of the sofa has a hint of the Japanese influence, which faintly, but only faintly, suggests itself all through the room. Its latticework back and wheel-patterned ends might pass for bamboo; the carpentry is as light as if the long fingers of a saffron-faced artist had coaxed it into shape." \*

Messrs. Obach had in their possession a set of glass panels for a door, taken from the house of Mr. Anderson Rose, which was stated to be by Whistler. But there is no evidence of Whistler's work in it. The rooms of Mrs. William Whistler, Mr. William Heinemann, Señor Sarasate, Mrs. Walter Sickert, Mrs. D'Oyly Carte, Mr. Menpes, and others were decorated by him. But the decoration in all these houses was simply a colour-scheme for the walls. Whistler mixed the colour, which was usually put on by house painters. He suggested frequently the furniture, but of design, as in the Peacock Room, there was nothing, nor was there in any of his own houses after the White House. He often gave, as in the case of Mrs. Whistler, elaborate directions as to what colours should be used, and how they were to be applied. Mrs. D'Oyly Carte writes us:

"It would not be quite correct to say that Mr. Whistler designed the decorations of my house, because it is one of the old Adam houses in Adelphi Terrace, and it contained the original Adam ceiling in the drawing-room and a number of the old Adam mantelpieces, which Mr. Whistler much admired, as he did also some of the cornices, doors and other things. What he did do was to design a sort of colour-scheme for the house, and he mixed the colours for distempering the walls himself in each case,

\* Since writing the above, we have found a reference to this "Primrose Room" in an article by Mrs. Phoebe Garnaut Smalley in *The Lamp*, for March 1904. But she merely refers to its being in the Exhibition.

## THE WHITE HOUSE

leaving only the painters to *apply* them. In this way he got the *exact* shade he wanted, which made all the difference, as I think the difficulty in getting any painting satisfactorily done is that painters simply have their stock shades which they show you to choose from, and none of them seem to be the kind of shades that Mr. Whistler managed to achieve by the mixing of his ingredients. He distempered the whole of the staircase walls a very light pink colour; the dining-room a different and deeper shade; the library he made one of those yellows he had in his own drawing-room at the Vale, a sort of primrose which seemed as if the sun was shining, however dark the day, and he painted the woodwork with it green, but not like the ordinary painters' green at all. He followed the same scheme in the other rooms. His idea was to make the house 'gay' and delicate in colour."

To decoration, Whistler applied his scientific method of painting. In all his late work, there were harmonies produced by the mixing and arrangement of colour, and it is to be noted that on his walls, as in his pictures, black was often the basis of his most delicate tones. Colour, for him, was as much decoration as pattern was for William Morris, and in the use of simple colour for wall decoration, Whistler has triumphed. In the painting of pictures, the idea of the Pre-Raphaelites was decoration, that is, convention. Their scheme of decoration was either wilfully or ignorantly founded on the realism of the Middle Ages. The great decorators of Italy were the realists of their day, their realism, except in the case of the greatest, Piero della Francesca, is now regarded as convention, and it is the Pre-Raphaelites who stirred up these dead bones. In France, Puvis de Chavannes carried on the traditions of Italy by means of modern subjects and modern methods, though always there was the convention of flatness and simplicity, quite right in mural decoration. Whistler's belief was that a portrait, or a Nocturne, should be as decorative as a conventional design, that, by the spacing of his figures or subjects on the canvas, and by their colour, they should be made decorative, and not by

1878]

## JAMES McNEILL WHISTLER

conventional arrangement and conventional lines. He also believed that walls should be in flat tones and not covered with design. Pictures then placed upon them were shown properly, and did not struggle with any pattern. Lady Archibald Campbell writes us a few lines that prove how thoroughly he made people understand his aims when they were willing to learn from him :

“The fundamental principles of decorative art with which Whistler impressed me, related to the necessity of applying scientific methods to the treatment of all decorative work ; that to produce harmonious effects in line and ‘colour-grouping,’ the whole plan or scheme should have to be thoroughly thought out so as to be *finished* before it was practically begun. I think he proved his saying to be true, that the fundamental principles of decorative art, as in all art, are based on laws as exact as those of the known sciences. He concluded that what the knowledge of a fundamental base has done for music, a similarly demonstrative method must do for painting. The musical vocabulary which he used to distinguish his creations always struck me as singularly appropriate ; though he had no knowledge of music. On his teaching, I based my essay, *Rainbow Music*, a treatise on the philosophy of harmony in ‘colour-grouping.’ . . . You will have heard him reiterate that a portrait was worth nothing unless it was *decorative*, and that the subject must be painted well inside, or within, the frame, and not outside as the generality of painters place it, and that what we are accustomed to call life-size in portraiture is in reality colossal. I remember best one of his many witty sayings, ‘Velasquez always portrayed his standing subjects *standing on their legs*.’ ”

Before his trial came on, the idea of opening an *atelier* for students occurred to him, and as the studio at No. 2 Lindsey Row was far too small, he decided to give up the house, and Godwin was commissioned to build a new one in Tite Street. Up to this time Whistler had never had a studio in Chelsea. All his pictures had been painted in ordinary rooms, without a top light, partly, no doubt, because he wanted to paint his sitters under natural, not

## THE WHITE HOUSE

artificial conditions. Even in his later studios in the Rue Notre-Dame-des-Champs, in Paris, and in Fitzroy Street, London, shades and screens were so drawn that the light usually came in as from an ordinary window. He was trying to put the figure into the atmosphere that surrounded it, not to cut it out of this atmosphere. But the want of space at Lindsey Row was a continual inconvenience to himself, and made students an impossibility. The scheme of opening an *atelier* seemed to promise success. Among artists, there were always the few who believed in Whistler. Though he showed no pictures in Paris in 1878, Duranty only expressed the prevailing feeling when, in the *Gazette des Beaux-Arts*, he referred to Whistler's influence on the British painters who were hung in the Exhibition. Whistler had every reason to believe that, once he had a studio large enough to receive them, the students would come to it. The White House, low, three-storied, simple in ornament, is modest and unassuming compared to many other houses in Tite Street. It has been much changed, but the general plan still survives. When it was built, it shared the usual fate of everything associated with Whistler. The white brick of the walls, the green "Eureka" slate of the roof, the Portland stone facings, the greyish blue door and woodwork were as "eccentric" and "fantastic" as Whistler himself to ordinary journalists. To architectural papers they were the cause of violent debate and reckless calling of names. To the Metropolitan Board of Works, the simplicity of design was suspiciously plain and ugly, and mouldings in specified places were insisted upon in return for the necessary licence to build. Discussion followed discussion, and all, as well as we can now judge, because the studio was the most important feature of the interior and placed at the top of the house, because windows and doors were made where they were wanted, "and not with Baker Street regu-  
1878]

## JAMES McNEILL WHISTLER

larity," because Godwin and Whistler liked the "lovely effect" of the green tiles with the white walls. Mr. Quilter, who bought the house in 1879 and altered it, probably ruined the colour-scheme which Whistler had arranged, and the interior decoration, if it was ever completely carried out, does not now exist.

The house in Lindsey Row was let to Mr. Sydney Morse, whose tenancy was to begin at midsummer 1878, and who was to be married before taking possession. The cares crowding upon Whistler did not prevent those acts of kindness for which he was seldom given credit. He arranged the scheme of colour throughout the house for the new tenants, getting his man Cossens to do the distempering. Mrs. Morse writes :

"He was so afraid that we should do it wrongly that he personally superintended the work, and mixed the colour himself, though in consequence of this a whole 'wash' for the dining-room was spoilt, as he forgot to stir it up at the right moment—there was great discussion about gold size. The hall had two fine panels in blue on white by Whistler, two ships with sails set at sea. The house was coloured as 'a sunset.' The gold dado on the stairs was dotted with pink and white chrysanthemum petals. The drawing-room was papered, also the studio, but not until Whistler had gone in September."

He went to the wedding, on June 1, at Carshalton, and the incident Mrs. Morse likes best to recall is his courtesy to an old and feeble family governess, who was returning to town in the same train. Whistler not only looked after her on the journey, but, instead of getting out at his station, went on to hers, and put her safely into an omnibus, so that she said afterwards she had never met so kind a young man.

The one thing he could not do was to give up the house at the time appointed. June 25 came, and he was still there. July passed, and he had not gone : not until the middle of August could he get out, and even then he kept the studio.



THE WHITE HOUSE, TITE STREET, CHELSEA



## THE WHITE HOUSE

It was October when he moved into the White House, and it is surprising that he moved in at all. A man's money troubles are nobody's business save his own. But Whistler's debts and difficulties had everything to do with his movements and his work during the next few years, while gossip seizing upon them, as upon all his affairs, made them public property. He had quarrelled with his principal patron, Leyland, to whose sister-in-law he had been at one time engaged. But the engagement was broken, his mother's health kept her at Hastings, and he was alone. The criticism of the last few years told severely upon the sale of his pictures, upon his commissions for portraits, upon the man himself. Howell, who had "started cheques and orders flying about," and who attended to most business details, kept a diary during part of 1877, and all of 1878, which we have been able to consult. To look through it is to share Whistler's own indignation that so great an artist should be reduced to such shifts. In Kensington and St. John's Wood palaces, Academicians could not turn pictures out fast enough for the competing crowd. Whistler was often compelled to borrow a few shillings from a friend. There are legends of his taking a hansom and driving to find somebody to lend him half a crown to pay for it, and before he had found anybody and could get rid of the cab the fare had mounted to a guinea. Howell's diary shows how he raised money before he could lend it to Whistler. Sometimes larger sums than he could manage were arranged for with Mr. Anderson Rose, Whistler's friend and solicitor, who also looked after his affairs. As "ill and worried," Howell describes Whistler on one of the visits to Mr. Rose, and every reason there was that he should be. A Mr. Blott figures largely in other transactions. Whistler's letters to him got into the hands of dealers, and have been sold and published, and it would be useless to ignore Whistler's relations with him. Debts were pressing

1878]

## JAMES McNEILL WHISTLER

upon him. Money for the White House had to be obtained. To Mr. Blott he gave his *Carlyle* as security for the sum of a hundred and fifty pounds, agreeing to pay interest, offering other pictures as security, if a sum of four hundred in all could be advanced. Cheques were protested, writs were threatened. The marvel is that Whistler could work at all. The pictures he could not sell went wandering about as hostages. The *Mother* for a while was with Mrs. Noseda, the Strand printseller. We have heard that she would have sold it for a hundred pounds. Mr. Rawlinson, who saw it either there or at Mr. Graves', has told us that he felt the impossibility of any friend buying it under such circumstances, after having seen it at Lindsey Row, where it hung in Whistler's bedroom, and was shown by him with reverence. When it came to Whistler's knowledge that Mrs. Noseda was offering the picture for this price, he is said to have gone at once to remonstrate, and by his vehemence to have made her ill.

One man who helped him through these troubled times was Mr. Graves, head of the firm in Pall Mall. Mr. Graves, introduced to Whistler by Howell, agreed to reproduce the portrait of Carlyle in mezzotint, and Howell bought the copyright of the engraving from Whistler for eighty pounds and six proofs. W. Josey was commissioned to make the plate. Three hundred signed proofs of a first state were to be printed. The plate would not stand so large an edition ; it was steel-faced and, as the steel-facing of mezzotint was not possible, turned out a failure. The attempt to remove the steel ruined the ground, and Josey had to be called in to go over it again. In the actual first state, the floor was perfectly smooth, but, the steel-facing taken off, a spot appeared in the plate which never could be got out, and remained there through the edition. After every seventy proofs printed, Josey had to work on the plate and bring it back, as well as he could, to

## THE WHITE HOUSE

its original condition. Whistler did not like the first proofs and offered to show the printers how to do them. Mr. Graves went with him to Mr. Holdgate, the printer in London Street. Whistler brought his own ink, put on a large apron, inked the plate as he would an etched one, while the whole shop stood looking on. When the plate was inked and wiped, and ready, it was put through the press, and it came out a shadow, the ink being far too weak. Whistler did not try a second time. Mr. Graves preserved the proof, writing on it that Whistler pulled it, and sold it for three guineas: to whom, he does not remember. Eventually, Whistler was satisfied, for Howell, on December 2, 1878, gave Whistler what he calls his first proof, and the diary says: "Whistler and the Doctor [the brother] were delighted." It is also recorded in the diary that one of Whistler's six proofs was sold to Lord Beaconsfield.

The print of the *Carlyle* was not unsuccessful. At Howell's suggestion, Mr. Graves agreed to give Whistler a thousand pounds for a portrait of Disraeli, and the copyright: a plate to be made from it as a companion to the *Carlyle*. Another diary, Mr. Alan S. Cole's, gives the date of Whistler's visit to Disraeli:

"September 19, 1878.—Called on J., who told me of his interview with Lord Beaconsfield as to painting a portrait of him. He had been down at Hughenden—saw the old gentleman, who, however, declined."

Whistler's version of the visit was amusing:

"Everything was most wonderful. We were the two artists together—recognising each other at a glance! 'If I sit to any one, it will be to you, Mr. Whistler,' were Disraeli's last words as he left me at the gate. And then he sat to Millais!"

This scheme falling through, Mr. Graves commissioned Josey to reproduce the *Mother*, and afterwards the *Miss Rosa Corder*, painted as a commission from Howell. Whistler told 1878]

## JAMES McNEILL WHISTLER

us he offered the portrait as a present to Howell, who declined and insisted on paying a hundred guineas for it, and this is the amount entered in Howell's diary as paid to Whistler on September 9, 1878. It was sold to Mr. Canfield, in 1903, for two thousand pounds.

After the two pictures had been reproduced by Josey, Howell deposited in the same way three of the Nocturnes with Mr. Graves: *The Falling Rocket*, *The Fire Wheel*, *Old Miss Franklin*. Of these pictures no mezzotints were made. Whistler had not a minute to spare from legal troubles and impatient creditors. "Poor J. turned up, depressed—very hard up, and fearful of getting old," Mr. Cole wrote in his diary for October 16, 1878. Whistler had reason for depression. It was now that Howell's diary records his purchase of the *Irving* for ten pounds and a sealskin coat. There is nothing more tragic in Rembrandt's bankruptcy than this. A few weeks later, on November 25 (1878), the trial began.

## CHAPTER XIX. THE TRIAL. THE YEAR EIGHTEEN SEVENTY-EIGHT

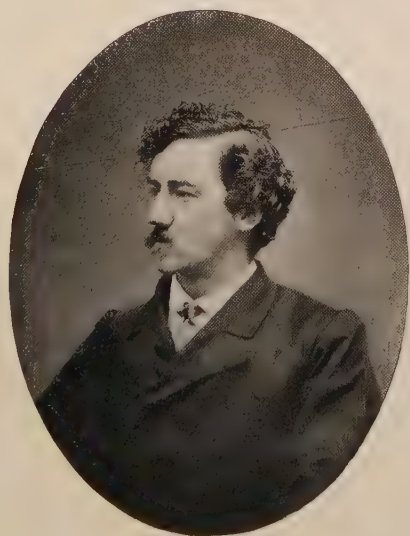
THE action Whistler *v.* Ruskin is the most notorious episode in Whistler's life. And yet the reason for it "the spirit of the matter," was ignored at the time, and has remained a mystery ever since.

The appearance of Whistler's pictures at the Grosvenor was the signal for a general outcry. The loudest voice and the shrillest was that of John Ruskin, leader of taste, critic of art, prophet and propounder of new gospels of "the Beautiful." He carried with him not only a following of believers, but the public who had been told for years that in him lay the truth. Whistler felt that either he or Ruskin must settle the question whether an artist may say what he wants, do what he wants, paint what he wants, honestly in his own way, though this may not be understood by the patron, the critic, the Academy, or the real British judge, the man in the street; whether the artist should rule himself or be ruled. The case was, he said, "between the Brush and the Pen." His motives were ignored, the proceedings made a jest, and the verdict treated as a farce. Few could, or do, realise even to-day, that Whistler was in earnest, that the trial was a defence of his principles, and the verdict a public justification of his artistic belief.

At the time of the trial, Whistler was to the British public a charlatan, a mountebank. Ruskin was the people's prophet, and the professor of art. Whistler denied the right of a master of English literature, who had become the popu-

## JAMES MCNEILL WHISTLER

lariser of pictures, to consider himself a prophet and a pope, as Ruskin undoubtedly did, his head turned by his success in the defence of the Pre-Raphaelites and the booming of Turner. So good a friend of Ruskin's as Mr. W. M. Rossetti thought him "substantially wrong in the matter," and points out that his mind broke down at times, and that his mental troubles had begun as far back as 1860. His conceit and his vanity, as we have said, can hardly be explained in any other way. Unfortunately for him, he lived in the only country where his arrogant pretensions would have been countenanced, though, owing to the present acceptance of England and everything English, he has become something of a fetich in France and Italy, just as he begins to be discredited as critic at home. He was rich, the first qualification for success; he was a University man, the second; he was keen to contribute long letters to the *Times*. He was a more or less generous patron of the artists he admired; moreover, he was a master of English: therefore he could commit any absurdity he wanted. As Whistler said, political economists considered him a great art critic, and artists looked upon him as a great political economist. Sometimes we wondered, when Whistler laughed, if there was not another reason, beside mental illness, for Ruskin's inconsequent personal venom. He never appreciated the great artists of the world, save certain Italians, recognised long before. His estimate of Velasquez and Rembrandt, and his comparison between Turner and Constable, are sufficient to prove how little his now unheeded sermons were ever worth. While he failed to comprehend Charles Keene, he went into ecstasies over Kate Greenaway. Whistler, knowing all this, may have offended. Mr. Collingwood wrote that, long before the trial, Whistler "had made overtures to the great critic through Mr. Swinburne, the poet; but he had not been



"WILLIE" (DR.) WHISTLER

"JIMMIE" (MCNEILL) WHISTLER

THE TWO BROTHERS AS BOYS AND MEN



## THE TRIAL

taken seriously." It is certain Ruskin was not taken seriously by the great artist.

The publication of Ruskin's criticism of the Grosvenor in 1877 could have had no enduring ill-effect on Whistler, and we do not imagine he thought it could. But he determined at any cost to drive this self-anointed preacher from his pulpit. With the support of Mr. Anderson Rose, his solicitor, he went to work to prepare the case, and we know the endless pains and trouble he took. He thought, at first, that the artists would be on his side, and would combine with him to drive the false prophet out of the temple. But Ruskin, the critic, was to them more powerful than Whistler, the painter, and when the time came they all sneaked away except Albert Moore. Besides, there was the unspoken hope that the Yankee would lose. Whistler told us

"they all hoped they could drive me out of the country, or kill me! And if I hadn't had the constitution of a Government mule, they would."

Even Charles Keene, whom Whistler considered the greatest English artist since Hogarth, could write on November 24, 1878:

"Whistler's case against Ruskin comes off, I believe, on Monday. He wants to subpoena me as a witness as to whether he is (as Ruskin says) an impostor or not. I told him I should be glad to record my opinion, but begged him to do without me if he could. They say it will most likely be settled on the point of law without going into evidence, but if the evidence is adduced, it will be the greatest 'lark' that has been known for a long time in the courts."

Keene did not dare to stand up publicly for Whistler and for art, and the bitterness of it all is in those last words—"a lark!"

On November 25, 1878, in the Exchequer Division at Westminster, the action for libel, in which "Mr. James 1878]

## JAMES McNEILL WHISTLER

Abbott McNeill Whistler, *an* artist, seeks to recover damages against Mr. John Ruskin, *the* well-known author and art critic," was brought up before Baron Huddleston and a special jury. Our account is compiled chiefly from the reports published in the *Times* and the *Daily News*, November 26 and 27, 1878, from *The Gentle Art* and from what Whistler, Mr. Rossetti, Mr. Armstrong, Mr. Graves and others who were present have told us. According to Lady Burne-Jones, Ruskin had been delighted at the prospect of the trial:

"It's nuts and nectar to me, the notion of having to answer for myself in court, and the whole thing will enable me to assert some principles of art economy which I've never got into the public's head by writing; but may get sent over all the world vividly in a newspaper report or two."

Nuts and nectar turned into gall and vinegar. Through the early winter of 1878, rumours of his ill-health reached the papers. Lady Burne-Jones adds that, when the action was brought, "although he had quite recovered from his illness, he was not allowed to appear."

The case excited great interest, and the court was crowded, even the passages being filled. Mr. Sergeant Parry and Mr. Petheram were counsel for the plaintiff, and the Attorney-General (Sir John Holker) and Mr. Bowen for the defendant. Mr. Sergeant Parry opened the case for Whistler,

"who has followed the profession of an artist for many years, while Mr. Ruskin is a gentleman well known to all of us, and holding perhaps the highest position in Europe or America as an art critic. Some of his works are destined to immortality, and it is the more surprising, therefore, that a gentleman, holding such a position, could traduce another in a way that would lead that other to come into a court of law to ask for damages. The jury, after hearing the case, will come to the conclusion that a great injustice has been done. Mr. Whistler, in the United States, has earned a reputation as a painter and an artist. He is not merely a painter, but has likewise distinguished himself in the



THE FALLING ROCKET

*(Nocturne in Black and Gold)*



## THE TRIAL

capacity of etcher, achieving considerable honours in that department of art. He has been an unwearied worker in his profession, always desiring to succeed, and if he had formed an erroneous opinion, he should not have been treated with contempt and ridicule. Mr. Ruskin edits a publication called *Fors Clavigera*, that has a large circulation among artists and art patrons. In the July number of 1877 appeared a criticism of the pictures in the Grosvenor, containing the paragraph which is the defamatory matter complained of. Sir Coutts Lindsay is described as an amateur, both in art and shop-keeping, who must take up one business or the other. Mannerisms and errors are pointed out in the work of Burne-Jones, but whatever their extent, his pictures 'are never affected or indolent. The work is natural to the painter, however strange to us, wrought with the utmost conscience and care, however far, to his or our desire, the result may seem to be incomplete. Scarcely so much can be said for any other pictures of the modern schools. Their eccentricities are almost always in some degree forced, and their imperfections gratuitously, if not impertinently, indulged. For Mr. Whistler's own sake, no less than for the protection of the purchaser, Sir Coutts Lindsay ought not to have admitted works into the gallery in which the ill-educated conceit of the artist so nearly approaches the aspect of wilful imposture. I have seen and heard much of cockney impudence before now, but never expected to hear a coxcomb ask two hundred guineas for flinging a pot of paint in the public's face.' Mr. Ruskin pleaded that the alleged libel was privileged, as being a fair and *bona fide* criticism upon a painting which the plaintiff had exposed to public view. But the terms in which Mr. Ruskin has spoken of the plaintiff are unfair and ungentlemanly, and are calculated to, and have done him, considerable injury, and it will be for the jury to say what damages the plaintiff is entitled to."

Whistler was the first witness called, and is reported to have begun his evidence by giving St. Petersburg as his birth-place. He continued :

"I studied in Paris, with Du Maurier, Poynter, Armstrong. I was awarded a gold medal at The Hague . . . my etchings are in the British Museum and Windsor Castle collections. I exhibited eight pictures at the Grosvenor Gallery in the summer 1878]

## JAMES McNEILL WHISTLER

of 1877. No pictures were exhibited there save on invitation. I was invited by Sir Coutts Lindsay to exhibit. The first was a *Nocturne in Black and Gold—The Falling Rocket*. The second, a *Nocturne in Blue and Silver* [since called *Blue and Gold—Old Battersea Bridge*]. The third, a *Nocturne in Blue and Gold*, belonging to the Hon. Mrs. Percy Wyndham. The fourth, a *Nocturne in Blue and Silver*, belonging to Mrs. Leyland. The fifth, an *Arrangement in Black—Irrving as Philip II. of Spain*. The sixth, a *Harmony in Amber and Black*. The seventh, an *Arrangement in Brown*. In addition to the original eight, there was a portrait of Mr. Carlyle. That portrait was painted from sittings Mr. Carlyle gave me. It has since been engraved, and the artist's proofs were all subscribed for. The Nocturnes, all but two, were sold before they went to the Grosvenor Gallery. One of them was sold to the Hon. Percy Wyndham for two hundred guineas—the one in *Blue and Gold*. One I sent to Mr. Graham in lieu of a former commission, the amount of which was a hundred and fifty guineas. A third one, *Blue and Silver*, I presented to Mrs. Leyland. The one that was for sale was in *Black and Gold—The Falling Rocket*."

Curiously, the only one for sale was pounced on by Ruskin. The coxcomb was trying to get two hundred guineas.

Asked whether, since the publication of the criticism, he had sold a Nocturne, Whistler answered: "Not by any means at the same price as before."

The portraits of Irving and Carlyle were produced in court, and he is said to have described the *Irving* as "a large impression—a sketch; it was not intended as a finished picture." We do not believe he said anything of the sort.

He was then asked for his definition of a Nocturne:

"I have perhaps meant rather to indicate an artistic interest alone in the work, divesting the picture from any outside sort of interest which might have been otherwise attached to it. It is an arrangement of line, form and colour first, and I make use of any incident of it which shall bring about a symmetrical result. Among my works are some night pieces; and I have chosen the word Nocturne because it generalises and simplifies the whole set of them."

## THE TRIAL

*The Falling Rocket*, though it is difficult here to follow the case, was evidently produced at this point upside down; Whistler, describing it as a night piece, said it represented the fireworks at Cremorne.

*Attorney-General* : " Not a view of Cremorne ? "

*Whistler* : " If it were called a view of Cremorne, it would certainly bring about nothing but disappointment on the part of the beholders. (Laughter.) It is an artistic arrangement."

*Attorney-General* : " Why do you call Mr. Irving an Arrangement in Black ? " (Laughter.)

Even the judge interposed, though in jest for there was more laughter, and explained that the picture, not Mr. Irving, was the Arrangement.

*Whistler* : " All these works are impressions of my own. I make them my study. I suppose them to appeal to none but those who may understand the technical matter."

And he added that it would be possible to see the pictures in Westminster Palace Hotel close by, where he had placed them for the purpose.

*Attorney-General* : " I suppose you are willing to admit that your pictures exhibit some eccentricities. You have been told that over and over again ? "

*Whistler* : " Yes, very often." (Laughter.)

*Attorney-General* : " You send them to the Gallery to invite the admiration of the public ? "

*Whistler* : " That would be such vast absurdity on my part that I don't think I could." (Laughter.)

*Attorney-General* : " Did it take you much time to paint the *Nocturne in Black and Gold* ? How soon did you knock it off ? " (Laughter.)

*Whistler* : " I knocked it off possibly in a couple of days."

In *The Gentle Art* this is reported :

*Attorney-General* : " Can you tell me how long it took you to knock off that *Nocturne* ? "

*Whistler* : " I beg your pardon ? " (Laughter.)

## JAMES McNEILL WHISTLER

*Attorney-General* : " I am afraid that I am using a term that applies rather perhaps to my own work." . . .

*Whistler* : . . . " Let us say then, how long did I take to—'knock off,' I think that is it—to knock off that Nocturne ; well, as well as I remember, about a day. . . . I may have still put a few more touches to it the next day if the painting were not dry. I had better say then, that I was two days at work on it."

*Attorney-General* : " The labour of two days, then, is that for which you ask two hundred guineas ? "

*Whistler* : " No ; I ask it for the knowledge of a lifetime." . . .

*Attorney-General* : " You don't approve of criticism ? "

*Whistler* : " I should not disapprove in any way of technical criticism by a man whose life is passed in the practice of the science which he criticises ; but, for the opinion of a man whose life is not so passed, I would have as little regard as you would, if he expressed an opinion on law."

*Attorney-General* : " You expect to be criticised ? "

*Whistler* : " Yes, certainly ; and I do not expect to be affected by it until it comes to be a case of this kind."

The Nocturne, the *Blue and Silver*, was then produced.

*Whistler* : " It represents Battersea Bridge by moonlight."

*The Judge* : " Is this part of the picture at the top old Battersea Bridge ? Are those figures on the top of the bridge intended for people ? "

*Whistler* : " They are just what you like."

*The Judge* : " That is a barge beneath ? "

*Whistler* : " Yes, I am very much flattered at your seeing that. The picture is simply a representation of moonlight. My whole scheme was only to bring about a certain harmony of colour."

*The Judge* : " How long did it take you to paint that picture ? "

*Whistler* : " I completed the work in one day, after having arranged the idea in my mind." \*

\* This was the picture that then belonged to Mr. Graham, that some years after at his sale at Christie's was received with hisses, that was then purchased by Mr. Robert H. C. Harrison for sixty pounds, and that at the close of the London Whistler Memorial Exhibition was bought for two thousand guineas by the National Arts Collection Fund, presented to the nation, and hung in the National Gallery.



NOCTURNE IN BLUE AND SILVER, No. 1



## THE TRIAL

The court adjourned, and the jury went to see the pictures at the Westminster Palace Hotel. When, on their return, the *Nocturne in Black and Gold—The Falling Rocket*, was produced, the Attorney-General asked :

“ How long did it take you to paint that ? ”

*Whistler* : “ One whole day and part of another.”

*Attorney-General* : “ What is the peculiar beauty of that picture ? ”

*Whistler* : “ It would be impossible for me to explain to you, I am afraid, although I daresay I could to a sympathetic ear.”

*Attorney-General* : “ Do you not think that anybody looking at the picture might fairly come to the conclusion that it had no particular beauty ? ”

*Whistler* : “ I have strong evidence that Mr. Ruskin did come to that conclusion.”

*Attorney-General* : “ Do you think it fair that Mr. Ruskin should come to that conclusion ? ”

*Whistler* : “ What might be fair to Mr. Ruskin, I cannot answer. No artist of culture would come to that conclusion.”

*Attorney-General* : “ Do you offer that picture to the public as one of particular beauty, fairly worth two hundred guineas ? ”

*Whistler* : “ I offer it as a work that I have conscientiously executed, and that I think worth the money. I would hold my reputation upon this, as I would upon any of my other works.”

Mr. W. M. Rossetti was the next witness called. He had been subpoenaed the day before. He was Ruskin's friend as well as Whistler's, and the position was not pleasant. But, he has written us, he was “ compelled to act, willy-nilly, in opposition to Ruskin's interest in the action.”

*Rossetti* : “ I consider the *Blue and Silver* an artistic and beautiful representation of a pale but bright moonlight. I admire Mr. Whistler's pictures, but not without exception. I appreciate the meaning of the titles. *The Falling Rocket* is not one of the pictures I admire.”

*Attorney-General* : “ Is it a gem ? ” (Laughter.)

*Rossetti* : “ No.”

*Attorney-General* : “ Is it an exquisite painting ? ”

*Rossetti* : “ No.”

## JAMES McNEILL WHISTLER

*Attorney-General* : " Is it very beautiful ? "

*Rossetti* : " No. "

*Attorney-General* : " Is it a work of art ? "

*Rossetti* : " Yes, it is. "

*Attorney-General* : " Is it worth two hundred guineas ? "

*Rossetti* : " Yes. "

Albert Moore, when he was called, said that Whistler's pictures were beautiful works of art, and that no other painter could have succeeded in them as he had. The *Black and Gold* he looked upon as simply marvellous, the most consummate art. Asked if there was eccentricity in the picture, he said he should call it originality.

W. G. Wills, Whistler's only other witness, testified to the knowledge shown in the pictures ; they were the works of a man of genius.

Mr. Algernon Graves had been subpoenaed, and was in court to give evidence to the popularity of the *Carlyle*. As the picture was not catalogued when exhibited at the Grosvenor, Baron Huddleston ruled that there was no proof of its having been exhibited in 1877, and he was not called.

The Attorney-General submitted there was no case. But Baron Huddleston could not deny that the criticism, as it stood, held Whistler's work up to ridicule and contempt ; that so far it was libellous, and must, therefore, go to the jury. It was for the Attorney-General to prove it fair and honest criticism.

The Attorney-General's address to the jury began with praise of Ruskin, it went on with ridicule of the testimony for the plaintiff, it finished with contempt for Whistler and his work.

" The Nocturnes were not worthy the name of great works of art. He had that morning looked into the dictionary for the meaning of coxcomb, and found that the word carried the old idea of the licensed jester, who had a cap on his head with a cock's comb in it. If that were the true definition, Mr. Whistler

## THE TRIAL

should not complain, because his pictures were capital jests which had afforded much amusement to the public. He said, without fear of contradiction, that, if Mr. Whistler founded his reputation on the pictures he had shown in the Grosvenor Gallery, the *Nocturne in Black and Gold*, the *Nocturne in Blue and Silver*, his *Arrangement of Irving in Black*, his representation of the *Ladies in Brown*, and his *Symphonies in Grey and Yellow*, he was a mere pretender to the art of painting."

In Ruskin's absence, Burne-Jones was the first witness called for the defence. Lady Burne-Jones says, in her *Memorials of Edward Burne-Jones*, that on November 2, Ruskin had written to him :

"I gave your name to the blessed lawyer, as chief of men to whom they might refer for anything which, in their wisdom, they can't discern unaided concerning me."

She adds that, for her husband :

"Few positions could have been more annoying or difficult, for the paragraph containing the sentence in question—one of Ruskin's severest condemnations—was practically a comparison between Mr. Whistler's work and Edward's own. But the subject covered so much wider ground than any personality that Edward was finally able to put this thought aside, and did with calmness what he had undertaken to do, namely—endorse Ruskin's criticism that good workmanship was essential to a good picture."

Mr. Walter Crane states, in his *Reminiscences*, that he met Burne-Jones at dinner, at Leyland's, not long before the trial, and that then Burne-Jones would not see Whistler's merits as an artist. "He seemed to think there was only *one* right way of painting. . . . Under the circumstances, he could hardly afford to allow any credit to Whistler." In court, however, Burne-Jones temporised. He admitted Whistler's art, while he regretted the want of finish in Whistler's pictures : so strengthening the public's impression of the laziness, levity, or incompetence of Whistler. In his "deliberate judgment," Mrs. Leyland's *Blue and Silver* was

1878] 239

## JAMES McNEILL WHISTLER

a work of art, but a very incomplete one. It did not, in any sense whatever, show the finish of a complete work of art—yet

“it is masterly. Neither in composition, detail, nor form has the picture any quality whatever, but, in colour, it has a very fine quality. . . . *Blue and Silver—Old Battersea Bridge*, in colour is even better than the other. It is more formless, it is bewildering in form. As to composition and detail, there is none whatever. It has no finish. I do not think Mr. Whistler intended it to be regarded as a finished picture.”

*Mr. Bowen* : “Now, take the *Nocturne in Black and Gold—The Falling Rocket*, is that, in your opinion, a work of art ? ”

*Burne-Jones* : “No, I cannot say that it is. It is only one of a thousand failures that artists have made in their efforts to paint night.”

*Mr. Bowen* : “Is that picture in your judgment worth two hundred guineas ? ”

*Burne-Jones* : “No, I cannot say it is, seeing how much careful work men do for much less. Mr. Whistler gave infinite promise at first, but I do not think he has fulfilled it. I think he has evaded the great difficulty of painting, and has not tested his powers by carrying it out. The difficulties in painting increase daily as the work progresses, and that is the reason why so many of us fail. We are none of us perfect. The danger is this, that if unfinished pictures become common, we shall arrive at a stage of mere manufacture and the art of the country will be degraded.”

*Mr. Frith, R.A.*, was next called. Truly, Ruskin found himself with strange supporters. Frith was chosen, we have been told, because Ruskin wanted some one who could not be thought biased in his favour.

*Mr. Bowen* : “Are the pictures works of art ? ”

*Frith* : “I should say not.”

*Mr. Bowen* : Is the *Nocturne in Blue and Gold* a serious work of art ? ”

*Frith* : “Not to me. It is not worth, in my opinion, two hundred guineas. *Old Battersea Bridge* does not convey the impression of moonlight to me in the slightest degree. The colour does not represent any more than you could get from a bit of wall-paper or silk.”

## THE TRIAL

In cross-examination, he flatly contradicted himself, and said that he thought Mr. Whistler had "very great power as an artist."

Ruskin's final supporter was Tom Taylor, critic of the *Times*. No, he said, the *Nocturne in Black and Gold* was not a good picture, and, to prove it, he read his own criticism in the *Times*, and his assertion there that the Nocturnes were worth doing because they were the only things that Whistler could do.

A portrait by Titian was then shown, in order to explain Burne-Jones' idea of finish, and the jury, mistaking it for a Whistler, would have none of it.

Mr. Bowen, in summing up the case, said all that Ruskin had done was to express an opinion on Whistler's pictures—an opinion to which he adhered. This was about all he could say, except, in conclusion, to appeal to the jury. There really was no defence. Mr. Sergeant Parry, in his reply, pointed out that they had not dared to ask if Whistler deserved to be stigmatised as a wilful impostor, and that, even if Ruskin had not been well enough to attend the court

"he might have been examined before a commission. His decree has gone forth that Mr. Whistler's pictures were worthless. He has not supported that by evidence. He has not condescended to give reasons for the view he has taken, he has treated us with contempt, as he treated Mr. Whistler. He has said: 'I, Mr. Ruskin, seated on my throne of art, say what I please and expect all the world to agree with me.' Mr. Ruskin is great as a writer, but not as a man; as a man he has degraded himself. His tone in writing the article is personal and malicious. Mr. Ruskin's criticism of Mr. Whistler's pictures is almost exclusively in the nature of a personal attack, a pretended criticism of art which is really a criticism upon the man himself, and calculated to injure him. It was written recklessly, and for the purpose of holding him up to ridicule and contempt. Mr. Ruskin has gone out of his way to attack Mr. Whistler personally, and must answer for the consequences of having written a damnatory

## JAMES McNEILL WHISTLER

attack upon the painter. This is what is called pungent criticism, stinging criticism, but it is defamatory, and I hope the jury will mark their disapproval by their verdict."

The judge in summing up, pointed out that

"there are certain words by Mr. Ruskin, about which, I should think, no one would entertain a doubt: those words amount to a libel. The critic should confine himself to criticism, and not make it a veil for personal censure or for showing his power. The question for the jury is, did Mr. Whistler's ideas of art justify the language used by Mr. Ruskin? And the further question is whether the insult offered—if insult there has been—is of such a gross character as to call for substantial damages; whether it is a case for merely contemptuous damages to the extent of a farthing, or something of that sort, indicating that it is one which ought never to have been brought into court, and in which no pecuniary damage has been sustained; or whether the case is one which calls for damages in some small sum as indicating the opinion of the jury that the offender has gone beyond the strict letter of the law."

After an hour's deliberation, the jury gave their verdict for the plaintiff—damages one farthing. The judge emphasised his contempt by giving judgment for the plaintiff without costs; that is, both sides had to pay.

"The whole thing was a hateful affair," Burne-Jones wrote to Rossetti, and many agreed with him, though for other reasons. The *Times*, the *Spectator*, and the *Portfolio* pronounced the verdict satisfactory to neither party, virtually a censure upon both, who alike would have to suffer heavily. Mr. Graves, who watched the trial without the responsibility he was well disposed to meet, says:

"I have always felt that, had the plaintiff's counsel impressed upon the jury that Mr. Ruskin had mentioned the price asked for the picture, a matter that has always been quite outside the critic's province, as well as criticising them as works of art, the result to Mr. Whistler would have been more in his favour. Mr. Tom Taylor was in the box, and he was never asked whether he had ever criticised the price as well as the quality."

## THE TRIAL

Mr. Armstrong has told us of the suppression of important letters that must have influenced the verdict. He writes us :

“ I think I cannot have been in London when the trial took place ; at any rate, I was not present in court. A little while before it came on, I met Whistler one evening at the Arts Club, and he told me of his hopes of a favourable result. My sympathies were entirely on his side. I feared, however, that a jury could never be brought to see any beauty in Jimmie’s pictures—even the best of them—and that therefore they might condone the brutality of Mr. Ruskin’s attack. Whistler assured me that he had evidence, which I believed could not fail to be effective, in the shape of letters from Leighton, P.R.A. ; Burton, Director of the National Gallery ; and Poynter, R.A., then Director for Art at S.K., speaking highly of the moonlight pictures. These letters seemed to me most important (I never read them), for they were from the hands of people in official positions, whose good words would have weight with the British jurymen, or the ordinary *bourgeois*. Nothing was said about these letters in the newspaper reports of the trial, and I asked Jimmie the reason for this omission of the strongest evidence on his side. He told me that the writers of the letters had objected to their being put in, and so he had refrained from using them, and without the personal testimony of the writers they would not have been accepted as evidence in court. The accounts he gave of the trial were very funny. He described the bewilderment of the jury as the paintings—the Nocturnes—were passed round for their inspection, and how, when, last of all, Mr. Ruskin’s *Titian* was handed to them, one exclaimed, ‘ Oh, come ! we have had enough of these Whistlers ! ’ He said his pictures were presented to them upside down. About a fortnight after the trial, I saw Holker, at that time Solicitor- or Attorney-General, who led for Mr. Ruskin, and asked him if he had been helping to smirch any more poor artists. He replied that he was bound to do the best he could for his client. I told him he would never have allowed the exhibition of the pictures in court if he had been Whistler’s counsel, and he asked : ‘ Why didn’t Jimmie have me ? ’ I explained that I had recommended his being retained, but it was objected that his fee would be too heavy, and he said :

## JAMES McNEILL WHISTLER

‘I’d have done it for nothing for Jimmie.’ I was very sorry that Mr. Ruskin was not punished.”

Mr. Arthur Severn writes us that, at the Ruskin trial, he

“ was on the opposite side, although my sympathies were rather with Whistler, whose *Nocturne in Black and Gold* I knew to be very carefully painted. Whenever we met, he was always most courteous, quite understanding my position. During the trial, two or three little incidents happened which I may mention. One of the Nocturnes was handed across the court over the people’s heads, so that Whistler might verify it as his work. On its way, an old gentleman with a bald head got a tap from the frame, then the picture showed signs of falling out of its frame, and when Sergeant Parry turned to Whistler and said : ‘Is that your work, Mr. Whistler?’ the artist, putting his eye-glass up, and with his slight American twang, said : ‘Well, it was, but if it goes on much longer in that way, I don’t think it will be.’ I thought Whistler looked anxious whilst the jury was away. Another trial seemed to come on, so as not to waste time. The court was very dark, and candles had to be brought in—it seemed to be about some rope, and huge coils were on the solicitor’s table. A very stupid clerk was being examined. Nothing intelligent could be got out of him, and at last Mr. Day one of the counsel (afterwards the judge) said : ‘Give him the rope’s end,’ which produced great laughter in court, in which Whistler heartily joined. Then, suddenly, a hush fell on the court ; the jury returned a verdict for Whistler, damages, one farthing.”

There was a report of an application for a new trial. A desire was expressed on many sides that friends of artist and critic might be allowed to adjust the dispute. But Whistler made no application, called for no arbitration. He accepted his farthing damages. The British public rallied to their prophet, and got up a subscription for the rich man. It was managed by the Fine Art Society. The account was opened at the Union Bank of London in the names of Mr. Burne-Jones, Mr. F. S. Ellis and Mr. Marcus B. Huish, and by December 10 a subscription list was published, amounting

## THE TRIAL

already to one hundred and fifty-one pounds, five shillings and sixpence, and headed by Mr. Burne-Jones, five guineas. The costs were estimated at three hundred and eighty-five pounds.

According to Mr. W. M. Rossetti,

“ Whistler then wrote to his solicitor, Mr. Anderson Rose, saying (and I could not but agree with him so far) that it would be at least equally appropriate for a band of subscribers to pay his costs ; and he added, with one of his not easily imitable touches : ‘ And in the event of a subscription, I would willingly contribute my own mite.’ ”

Mr. J. P. Heseltine wished to get up a subscription for Whistler, started it with a contribution of twenty-five pounds, and a list was opened at the office of *L'Art*, 134 New Bond Street. But nothing came of it, except that Whistler sent one of his pastels to Mr. Heseltine. For Whistler, the poor man, the costs were not paid, and he went through the bankruptcy court.

It is often said that Whistler wore the farthing on his watch-chain. We never saw it, we never knew him to wear a watch-chain. But he did make a drawing of the farthing for *The Gentle Art*.

## CHAPTER XX. BANKRUPTCY. THE YEARS EIGHTEEN SEVENTY-EIGHT TO EIGHTEEN SEVENTY-NINE.

THE Attorney-General said that Whistler's pictures afforded amusement to the public, and the trial was followed by shouts of laughter from every paper that pretended to be comic, and many that did not. There were caricatures: Whistler "done brown"; Whistler mounted on a Nocturne, tilting against Ruskin astride a note-book; Whistler and Ruskin showing each other their portraits upside down. In *Punch*, Whistler masqueraded as the "Penny Whizzler," a grotesque bird with a whistle broken in two for legs, a drawing which he described as an "historical cartoon." It was by Mr. Sambourne, who wrote to Whistler to explain that he made it at the request of the editor, Tom Taylor. Whistler answered that, to have brought about an Arrangement in Frith, Jones, *Punch*, and Ruskin, with a touch of Titian, was a joy in itself sufficient to satisfy even his craving for curious combinations, and no sentiment need be thrown away upon what to Sambourne was "this trying time." Mr. Sambourne's letter and Whistler's reply were published, to the former's discomfiture, in the *World* (December 11, 1878), and they were afterwards reprinted in *The Gentle Art*. The *Standard* said:

"Of course, Mr. Whistler has costs to pay, and the amount he is to receive from Mr. Ruskin, even if economically expended, will hardly go far to satisfy the claims of his legal advisers. But he has only to paint, or, as we believe he expresses it, 'knock off'

## BANKRUPTCY

three or four 'Symphonies' or 'Harmonies'—or perhaps he might try his hand at a 'Set of Quadrilles in Peacock Blue'—and a week's labour will set all square."

The inevitable stream of letters flowed into the *Times*, and dribblets into other papers. There were interviews. Witticisms went the rounds. "What is more natural than for a 'Whistler' to go in for 'airs'?" the *Figaro* asked, and Whistler himself is reported to have said, "Well, you know, I don't go so far as to Burne-Jones, but really somebody ought to burn Jones's pictures!"

A few papers did not forget that Whistler was an artist, a few people were sympathetic, and congratulations were received at the White House. If Whistler was disappointed, he kept it to himself. He would have liked better to get his costs and damages, he said. But the verdict was a moral triumph. He had gone into court, not for damages, but to vindicate his position, and, therefore, that of all artists. He made sure that the vindication should become history. The trial was hardly over when, in December 1878, he published *Whistler v. Ruskin—Art and Art Critics*, the first of his series of pamphlets in brown paper covers. It was printed by Messrs. Spottiswoode, published by Messrs. Chatto and Windus, and dedicated to Albert Moore. The cover bore the Butterfly, and "J. A. McN. Whistler, The White House, Chelsea, December 24, 1878." The pamphlet was the simple statement of his argument to prove the folly of the Pen when, without knowledge or experience, it ventured to criticise the Brush. It was to him an outrage that, while literature is left to the literary man, and science to the scientist, art should be at the mercy of "the one who was never in it," but whose boast it is that he is doing good to Art. The critics "are all 'doing good'—yes, they all do good to Art. Poor Art! what a sad state the slut is in, and these gentlemen shall help her." Whistler could see no

1878]

## JAMES McNEILL WHISTLER

loss if Ruskin ceased to preach to the young what he could not perform, and if he resigned his Slade Professorship, as he had threatened to do, and promptly did. Why should he not fill a Chair of Ethics instead? The cry of the art critic, "*il faut vivre*," Whistler said he would meet with the appropriate answer, "*Je n'en vois pas la nécessité*." Another sentence often quoted: "A life passed among pictures makes not a painter—else the policeman in the National Gallery might assert himself." Whistler's argument passed for a novelty, and *Art and Art Critics*, falling for review into the hands of the men it abused, was condemned as "nonsense," "precious balderdash," absurd with its sprinkling of French; as if Whistler could not write better English than any and all of them. It was regretted that he should make his personal affairs the basis of cheap popularity. The *Saturday Review* "would not be rash enough to say of any pamphlet that it was the silliest ever produced, but Mr. Whistler's certainly is not the wisest we have seen." Other comments and criticisms, the killing of Tom Taylor and the new version of Balaam's ass, are all in *The Gentle Art*, where they can be consulted.

Whistler exhibited what he could, and where he could, exerting himself to make a finer showing than ever at the Grosvenor of 1879, to which he sent *Portrait of Miss Rosa Corder*, *Portrait of Miss Connie Gilchrist*, *The Pacific*, *Nocturne in Blue and Gold*, six etchings, two studies in chalk, and three studies in chalk and pastel. *Old Putney Bridge*, the print published by the Fine Art Society, was in the Royal Academy, from which he had been absent for seven years. Public and critics talked the old nonsense, with here and there a faint voice crying in the wilderness. Duranty saw a beauty in Whistler's Nocturnes worthy to report to the *Gazette des Beaux-Arts*; in the *Portfolio*, Hamerton—presumably, the note is unsigned—found an amiable word for

## BANKRUPTCY

the *Rosa Corder* and *The Pacific*; Mr. Comyns Carr committed himself in the *Academy* to the recognition of scope and strength in Whistler's resources. The praise, however, was not sufficient to relieve the situation in the White House. We have not come upon a more characteristic statement of the popular estimate of Whistler at that time than an article by Mr. Frederick Wedmore in the *Nineteenth Century* (August 1879), which he reprinted in his *Four Masters of Etching* (1883). As Whistler has been thought foolishly vindictive in his treatment of his critics, it is fair to remember the provocation they gave him. Mr. Wedmore's article was mainly a review of *Art and Art Critics*, which, evidently, had goaded him into fury. In his opinion, it was a "trivial pamphlet." Whistler had exposed the critic; the critic tried to pay him back by sneering at the artist:

"Long ago he was an artist of high promise. Now he is an artist often of agreeable, though sometimes of incomplete and seemingly wayward performance. . . . We want to look a little at the more commendable work as well as that for which has been bespoken that ill-advised notoriety which is but a spurious equivalent for fame. . . . We cannot accept the successful pattern where association and sentiment has been: forego comedy and pathos, laughter and tears for a scientific adjustment of yellow and of red. . . . That only the artist should write on art by continued reiteration may convince the middle-class public that has little of the instinct of art. But, sirs, not so easily can you dispense with the services of Diderot and Ruskin."

Mr. Wedmore had either forgotten, or never heard of, Cennini and Dürer, Vasari and Cellini, Da Vinci and Reynolds, and Fromentin, who remain, while Diderot and Ruskin are discredited, if not actually forgotten as authorities on art. He went on to regret that the originality of Whistler's "painted work is somewhat apt to be dependent on the innocent error that confuses the beginning with the end." He disposed of the *Portrait of Henry Irving* as a 1879]

## JAMES McNEILL WHISTLER

“murky caricature of Velasquez,” of the *Carlyle* as a “doleful canvas.” He reduced the Nocturnes to “encouraging sketches,” as far as his eyes could be trusted, seeing in them

“an effect of harmonious decoration, so that a dozen or so of them on the upper panels of a lofty chamber would afford even to the wall-papers of William Morris a welcome and justifiable alternative. . . . They suffer cruelly when placed against work not, of course, of petty and mechanical finish, but of patient achievement. But they have a merit of their own, and I do not wish to understate it.”

Whistler had “never mastered the subtleties of accurate form”; “the interest of life—the interest of humanity” had little occupied him; *but* Mr. Wedmore hoped that the career, begun with promise, “might not close in work too obstinately faithful to eccentric error.” By his etchings, his name might “aspire to live,” though, “for his fame, Mr. Whistler has etched too much, or at least has published too much,” though there is “commonness and vulgarity” in many figures in the prints, though he “lacked the art, the patience, or the will to continue” others.

“The Future will forget his disastrous Failures, to which in the Present has somehow been accorded, through the activity of Friendship, or the activity of enmity, a publicity rarely bestowed upon failures at all.”

In the same month, August 1879, another critic, an American, Mr. W. C. Brownell, published anonymously an article on *Whistler in Painting and Etching* in *Scribner's Monthly*. He treated Whistler and his work with a seriousness in “significant” contrast to Wedmore’s clumsy attempts at flippancy. This was the first strong article in Whistler’s support, and it was illustrated by an extraordinary series of wood-engravings after his pictures and prints. Amidst

250

[1879



THE GOLD SCAB, OR ERUPTION IN FILTHY LUCRE



## BANKRUPTCY

the torrent of sneers and abuse, it came at the moment when Whistler most needed it.\*

Whistler's financial affairs were in more hopeless confusion than ever. The expenses of the White House were heavier than he anticipated. The interference of the Metropolitan Board of Works, to whom every drawing and plan had to be submitted, resulted in delays, disagreements, alterations. He made what concessions he could ; he even accepted the stone mouldings insisted upon by the Board. The builder's estimate was largely exceeded before the decorations Boehm was to execute had been begun. He had brought debts from Lindsey Row. The legends of them centre about a greengrocer who is said to have let him run up his bill for endless tomatoes and rare fruit out of season, until it amounted to some six hundred pounds. When the greengrocer insisted on payment, Whistler said :

"How—what—why—why, of course, you have sent these things—most excellent things—and they have been eaten, you know, by most excellent people. Think what a splendid advertisement. And sometimes, you know, the salads are not quite up to the mark—the fruit, you know, not quite fresh. And if you go into these unseemly discussions about the bill—well, you know, I shall have to go into discussions about all this—and think how it would hurt your reputation with all these extraordinary people. I think the best thing is not to refer to the past—I'll let it go. And in the future, we'll have a weekly account—wiser, you know !"

The greengrocer left without his money, but received in payment two Nocturnes, one the blue upright Valparaiso. Another story of the same creditor is that he followed Whistler with his account to the White House, arriving as a grand piano was being carried in. Whistler said he was so busy

\* Perhaps it should be added that this first serious article on Whistler was by no means taken seriously, and that the most was made of Mr. Brownell's mistake in describing the dry-point of *Joe* as a portrait of Dr. Whistler.

## JAMES McNEILL WHISTLER

he couldn't attend to the matter just then, and the green-grocer went away happy, thinking if grand pianos were being bought, it must be all right.

Whistler used to say of stories told about him, that there was always some foundation for them. The fact is that the creditors in Lindsey Row had been many, though before moving to Tite Street, he wrote hopefully to his mother at Hastings of his economies, and his prospects for paying off his debts. Whistler did not know the meaning of economy. And the trial had to be paid for, the studio still waited for pupils, his most important pictures were with Mr. Graves, and no new commissions came. But, as far as he let the world see, his troubles made no difference to him.

It was no unusual occurrence for bailiffs to be in possession at the White House, or for bills to cover its walls. The first time it happened, he told the people whom he invited that they might know his house by the bills on it. Of the bailiffs he made another "joy," a new feature of his Sunday breakfasts. Mrs. Lynedoch Moncrieff has told us of a Sunday when, to her surprise, two or three men waited at table with Whistler's servant, John, and she said to Whistler :

"Why, Jimmie, I am glad to see you've grown so wealthy."

"Ha ha ! Bailiffs ! You know I had to put them to some use !"

Mr. W. M. Rossetti and his wife once found the same "liveried attendants."

" 'Your servants seem to be extremely attentive, Mr. Whistler, and anxious to please you,' one of the guests said. 'Oh, yes,' was his answer, 'I assure you they wouldn't leave me.'"

Others remember the Sunday when all the furniture in the house was numbered for a coming execution. When breakfast was announced by a bailiff, Whistler said :

"They are wonderful fellows. You will see how excellently

## BANKRUPTCY

they wait at table, and to-morrow, you know, if you want, you can see them sell the chairs you sit on every bit as well. Amazing."

Mrs. Edwin Edwards wrote us that, when he had at one time three men in possession, he treated them, while his friends carted away his pictures from the back door. Other friends say that the bailiffs, multiplied to seven, were invited into the garden, and given beer "with a little something in it." No sooner had they drunk of it than down went their heads on the table round which they sat, and they slept. People dining with Whistler that evening were taken into the garden to see the seven sleepers of Ephesus: "stick pins in them, shout in their ears—see—you can't wake them!" All evening it rained, and it snowed, and it thundered, and it lightened, and it hailed. All night they slept. Morning came and they slept. But just at the hour at which he had given them their glass the day before, they all woke up and asked for more.

The man who has bailiffs in his house because he cannot pay his debts must still manage to pay them. One of the "wonderful fellows" at the end of a week demanded his money. Whistler answered:

"If I could afford to keep you, I would do without you."

"But what is to become of my wife and family, if I don't get my wages?"

"Ha ha! You must ask those who sent you here to answer that question."

"I assure you, Mr. Whistler, I need the money badly."

"Why not do as I do then, and have a man in yourself?"

Whistler made a point of being courteous and attentive to these gentlemen, for, "really, it was kind of them to see to such tedious affairs." He asked the first bailiff whom he encountered in his house, one evening when he returned from the Arts Club:

"And how long will you remain 'the man in possession'?"

## JAMES McNEILL WHISTLER

"That, Mr. Whistler, depends on your paying Mr. ——'s bill."

"Awkward for me, but perhaps more so for you! I hope you won't mind it, though, you know, I fear your stay with me will be a lengthy one. However, you will find it not entirely unprofitable. For you will see and hear much that may be useful to you later on!"

When things got more desperate, bills covered the front of the house, announcing the approaching sale. Whistler, begging the bailiffs to make themselves at home, went off one night to dine. It was a stormy night, and, returning late, he found that the rain had washed loose some of the bills, which were flapping in the wind. He woke up the bailiffs, made them get a ladder, brought them into the street, and insisted that every bill should be pasted down in place again. He had allowed them, he said, to cover his house with their posters, but, so long as he lived in it, no man should leave it in a slovenly condition.

The crash came early in May 1879, and Whistler was declared bankrupt. The amount of his liabilities was four thousand six hundred and forty-one pounds, nine shillings and three pence, according to Messrs. Waddell and Co.'s statement of affairs, dated May 7, 1879. His assets were estimated at one thousand eight hundred and twenty-four pounds nine shillings and four pence, which was ultimately increased by one hundred pounds. Among his debtors were several friends, whom he urged to press their claims. In his long overcoat, longer than ever, swinging his light, thin cane, also lengthening in defiance, his hat set jauntily on the black curls, he appeared at the office of one of these friends, in the City, during business hours. "Ha ha!" he laughed as he came in. "Well, you know, here I am in the City! Amazing." And he sat down and gossiped lightly. The friend, knowing Whistler, knew something else must come of the visit. And it came, but not before Whistler got up to go.

## BANKRUPTCY

" You know, on the way, I dropped in to see George Lewis, being in the neighbourhood, and, you know, ha ha ! he gave me a paper for you to sign ! "

It was a petition in bankruptcy. The friend did not want to sign ; he had lent Whistler money, but was in no hurry to have it back. Whistler insisted, the friend could not escape, and would have put down as small a sum as possible. No, said Whistler, it must be for as much as possible, that he might have the more influence in the proceedings. The friend put down the exact amount, which was not large, and Whistler sauntered away, as if he had no heavier care than the fit of his coat and the weight of the cane he was swinging.

The meeting of the creditors was held at the Inns of Court Hotel, a few weeks later, in June. Sir Thomas Sutherland was in the chair, Whistler on one side, Sir George Lewis on the other. To Leyland, with whom he had no " business contract " for the Peacock Room, he attributed his bankruptcy, and Leyland, therefore, was his scapegoat. Various Chelsea tradesmen were also there. Except the solicitor, they all seemed amateurs in matters of bankruptcy. Papers were passed by the solicitor to the chairman, who endorsed them. Not a word was said. At last, an impatient butcher, or baker, springing up, moved that some explanation be made to the creditors. Leyland seconded him. At that, Whistler was on his feet, making a speech about plutocrats, men with millions, and what he thought of them. Everybody was stupefied ! No one knew what to do. With difficulty, solicitor and chairman pulled him down into his seat again. At the end of the meeting, debtor and creditors appeared to understand as little as at the beginning. But the law took its course. A committee of examiners was appointed, composed of Leyland, the largest creditor, Howell, and Mr. Thomas Way.

Leyland was not let off easily by Whistler. As Michael  
1879]

## JAMES McNEILL WHISTLER

Angelo, painting the walls of the Sistine Chapel, plunged the critic who had offended him into the depths of hell, so Whistler on his canvas caricatured the man by whom he thought himself wronged. He painted three pictures. The first was *The Loves of the Lobsters—an Arrangement in Rats*, the most prominent lobster in shirt-frills like Leyland. "Whom the gods wish to make ridiculous, they furnish with a frill!" he said to his friends, and the saying was repeated, until the chances are it reached Leyland, as he meant it should. The second was *Mount Ararat*, a Noah's ark stranded on a hill, with little figures approaching it, or perched on the roof, all in the obnoxious frills. The third, the cruellest, was *The Gold Scab, or Eruption in Frilthy Lucre*, a demon-like creature, breaking out everywhere in a strange eruption of golden sovereigns, wearing the now symbolic frill, seated on the White House playing the piano. The hideousness of the strange figure is more appalling because of the beauty of colour, the decorative charm. A malicious joke begun in anger, Mr. Arthur Symons has described it, from which "beauty exudes like the scent of a poisonous flower." Whistler's intention was that only these caricatures should be in the studio when Leyland, with the committee of examiners, made the official inspection. But in the meanwhile, they were seen by everybody who came to the White House. Mr. Augustus Hare wrote on May 13, 1879:

"This morning I went with Mrs. Duncan Stewart and a very large party to Whistler's studio—a huge place in Chelsea. We were invited to see the pictures, but there was only one there, *The Loves of the Lobsters*. It was supposed to represent Niagara, and looked as if the artist had upset the inkstand, and left Providence to work out its own results. In the midst of the black chaos were two lobsters curvetting opposite each other, and looking as if they were done with red sealing-wax. 'I wonder you did not paint the lobsters making love before they were boiled,' aptly observed a lady visitor. 'Oh, I never thought

## BANKRUPTCY

of that,' said Whistler! It was a joke, I suppose. The little man, with his plume of white hair ('the Whistler tuft,' he calls it) waving on his forehead, frisked about the room, looking most strange and uncanny, and rather diverted himself over our disappointment in coming so far and finding nothing to see. People admire like sheep his pictures in the Grosvenor Gallery following each other's lead because it is the fashion."

As Whistler would be houseless in a few months, the old plan for a journey to Venice was revived. Some years before, Whistler told us, Mr. Ernest G. Brown, then a very young man in the office of Messrs. Seeley and Co., had called on him at 2 Lindsey Row to see about the *Billingsgate* plate. Whistler made a deep impression on Mr. Brown, who could never forget afterwards Whistler's taking him to the window, and showing him the river, with Battersea beyond, or his talk of its beauty. When Mr. Brown left Messrs. Seeley for the Fine Art Society, he carried with him this impression of Whistler, and through his persuasion the Society undertook the publication of the three London plates. On business connected with them Mr. Brown again came to see Whistler at the White House. It was not long before the bankruptcy, and Whistler said: "I am afraid I am going to lose my house," and then spoke of work at Venice he had long wanted to do. Mr. Brown went back and discussed the matter with the directors, so well that a commission was given to Whistler for twelve plates to be made in Venice, and delivered to the Society in three months' time.

By September 7 (1879), Whistler, "apparently in great spirits," was "arranging his route to Venice" with Mr. Cole, and announcing that "everything was to be sold up." The receiver gave him permission to destroy unfinished work, that it might not be displayed to the public. Copper plates were scratched over, and pictures painted out with gum, stripped off their stretchers, and rolled up.

## JAMES McNEILL WHISTLER

When next to nothing was left, he packed his trunks; wrote over his front door: "Except the Lord build the house, their labour is but lost that build it.—E. W. Godwin, F.S.A., built this one"; and started for Venice, his first long journey since the voyage to Valparaiso.

The White House was sold on September 18, 1879 to Mr. Harry Quilter, who paid for it two thousand seven hundred pounds in money at the time, and later on in Whistler's endless jests at his expense. The public jeered as usual. The contents of the White House, the *Figaro* (September 1879) said,

"revealed a list of effects that even a broker's man would turn up his nose at, and if ever the 'seamy side' of a fashionable artist's existence was shown, it was during that auction in Cheyne Walk, Chelsea. . . . Truly, if Mr. Ruskin had wished to have his revenge, he might have enjoyed it to an unlimited extent at the White House, when his prosecutor's specially built-to-order abode was characterised as a disgrace to the neighbourhood by Philistine spectators, and its contents supplied material for the rude jokes of Hebrew brokers, and the special correspondent of the *Echo*."

"Two wooden spoons, a rusty knife handle and two empty oil tins," was one of the "lots" described for the delectation of the public. Everything was sacrificed and thrown away. Bundles of rubbish were carried off for a few shillings, and not even their purchasers dreamt that they would prove worth thousands of pounds if ever again they appeared in the saleroom. Out of this "rubbish" came an unfinished *Valparaiso*, the *Cremorne Gardens* shown at the London Memorial Exhibition, several full-lengths, including another *White Girl*, and *The Blue Girl*, the portrait of Miss Florence Leyland, in such a deplorable condition that nothing now remains but the two blue pots of flowers which stood on either side the figure. Mr. Thomas Way bought *The Lobsters* and





SKETCH OF "CONNIE GILCHRIST"  
(Pen and Ink)



CONNIE GILCHRIST  
*(Harmony in Yellow and Gold, The Gold Girl)*



## BANKRUPTCY

*Mount Ararat*, and they have passed into the possession of Mr. Freer.

Whistler's china, his prints, and some of his pictures were reserved for a sale at Sotheby's, on Thursday, February 12, 1880, when Whistler had been in Venice for some few months already. The title-page of the catalogue gives a good idea of what there was to sell: "In Liquidation. By Order of the Trustees of J. A. McN. Whistler. Catalogue of the Decorative Porcelain, Cabinets, Paintings, and other Works of Art of J. A. McN. Whistler. Received from the White House, Fulham, comprising Numerous Pieces of Blue and White China; the Painting in Oil of *Connie Gilchrist Dancing with a Skipping Rope*, styled *A Girl in Gold*, by Whistler; A Satirical Painting of a Gentleman, styled *The Creditor*, by Whistler. Crayon Drawings and Etchings, Cabinets, and Miscellaneous Articles." When Leyland learned that the *Gold Scab*, masquerading as *The Creditor*, was to be included in the sale, it is said he proposed to take legal measures to have it removed.

Several of Whistler's friends and the dealers who bought his work were present. Mr. Way, Oscar Wilde, the Fine Art Society, Messrs. Dowdeswell, Mr. Mitford, Mr. Deschamps Mr. Flower and Howell were the principal purchasers of the blue and white, the glass and the bronzes. Howell secured the Japanese screen that is the background for the *Princesse du Pays de la Porcelaine*. The Japanese bath fell to Mr. Jarvis. *The Creditor*, the "Satirical Portrait," was bought by Messrs. Dowdeswell for twelve guineas. The picture disappeared after this, but it turned up in the King's Road, Chelsea, years later, and was purchased by Mr. G. P. Jacomb-Hood. It has since been exhibited at the Goupil Gallery, when one of the serious new critics regretted that Whistler should have allowed himself to be influenced by Beardsley. *Connie Gilchrist Dancing with a Skipping Rope* was sold to  
1879]

## JAMES McNEILL WHISTLER

Mr. Wilkinson for fifty guineas. Whistler's bust, by Boehm, was bought by Mr. Way for six guineas. A crayon sketch, catalogued as a portrait of Sarah Bernhardt, was knocked down for five guineas to Oscar Wilde, who asked her to sign it, which she did, writing also that it was very like her. It might have been handed down as her portrait for ever, had it not been bought up at Oscar Wilde's sale, and found its way back to Whistler, who declared that Madame Bernhardt never sat to him for that, or any other, portrait. The sale at Sotheby's realised three hundred and twenty-eight pounds, nineteen shillings, and did not take up the whole of the auctioneer's day.

## CHAPTER XXI. VENICE. THE YEAR EIGHTEEN SEVENTY-NINE TO EIGHTEEN EIGHTY

WHISTLER'S work during his fourteen months in Venice is better known than any he ever did. He showed much of it as soon as he returned to London, and the rest, although not exhibited until later, can easily be identified, as his subjects were entirely Venetian and this was his only visit to Venice. But his life there has become more or less of a legend. There is one person, Maud Franklin, who could tell the whole truth, and she prefers to remain silent. Many people, still alive, were with him in Venice, but their memories are vague. And yet to-day, when two or three artists gather together of an evening at Florian's, or the Quadri, or the Orientale, it is of Whistler they talk. When the prize student arrives and has sufficiently raved, they say, "Oh, yes, but you will have to do it better than Whistler!" When a new discoverer of the picturesque brags, Whistler's old friends tell him of Whistler's discovery of "a courtyard, you know, that no one has ever seen, a most wonderful courtyard, amazing!" and of Whistler's offer to show it to them, though they knew Venice, and he did not as yet. And the next morning, he took them to it, and when they got there, Meissonier sat on one side and Miss Montalba on the other, Henry Woods in one corner, and Van Haanen opposite, while in the centre, in the high light was Leighton. It was the Abazzia. "Yes, this subject is No. 78," they said.

For years Whistler had wanted to do a series of Venetian  
1879]



## VENICE

Venice in 1880, tells of visits to the Scuola di San Rocco, of his climbing up for a closer look at the Tintoretto, of his delight because the technique of that master coincided with his own; Veronese and Titian he thought "great swells," and Canaletto and Guardi, great masters. He went to St. Mark's for midnight Mass on the one Christmas he spent in Venice, and declared that the Peacock Room, with the delicate harmony of its ceiling, was more splendid in effect than the Byzantine church with its golden domes. Years before, he had written to Fantin that it was a mistake, a waste of time, for the artist to go in search of new subjects, and during the early months in Venice, the new subject was probably as much a difficulty as the winter days. Countess Rucellai, then Miss Edith Bronson, writes us that

"he used to say Venice was an impossible place to sit down and sketch in—he always felt 'there was something still better round the corner.'"

Mr. Henry Woods has told us how, at first, he was continually wandering and looking among the endless mass of material for some inspiring motive. Mr. Woods was nearer Whistler's age than many of the artists in Venice, and not susceptible to Whistler's influence, but he remembers that Whistler, no matter how much he wandered, and how completely he appeared to be loafing, when he did find a subject, worked with a determination that no cold and cheerlessness could daunt. Mr. Woods writes us :

"I remember his remarkable energy—and actual suffering—when doing those beautiful pastels, nearly all done during the coldest winter I have known in Venice, and mostly towards evening, when the cold was bitterest! He soon found out the beautiful quality of colour there is here before sunset in winter. No mistake about it, he had a strong constitution. He was only unwell once here, and with a bad cold only."

The Fine Art Society had asked him to make twelve  
1879]

## JAMES McNEILL WHISTLER

plates, and to deliver them in three months. To Whistler, the quality of his work alone was of importance. The plates were not started for months after he got to Venice, though the Fine Art Society were continually demanding from him some sign of what he was doing. The answer he made was at first silence, and then to ask for more money. The Fine Art Society, he explained to us, were used to artists who agreed to definite terms and kept to the agreement. They began to have their doubts, and, at any suggestion of doubt, Whistler was furious. Then reports came to them that he was doing many things, and that he was working on enormous plates they had never ordered. Howell and others would say that Whistler, of course, would never come back, and when Academicians laughed at the very idea of their getting either plates or their money from such a "charlatan," they would write to him again. With each new suggestion of doubt or uncertainty on their part, Whistler's fury grew. This was the great cause of the trouble between him and the Society. "Amazing," their letters and his, Whistler used to say, "but, perhaps, not for the public." The only reason for the delay was his fastidiousness about his own work. Even Frank Duveneck, most procrastinating of mortals, had time to produce his series of Venetian etchings, and Otto Bacher to change his style and make his Venetian plates, before Whistler had found his subjects.

When at last he got to work, he worked unceasingly. It amused him to shock the American Consul by saying that idleness is the virtue of the artist, but it was a virtue he denied himself. He was up early in the morning, at half-past six. He never stopped while there was light or an effect. He could not be dragged to dinner before dark—he could scarcely keep his eyes open in the evening from fatigue. It was "the same old story" he told his mother ;



THE BASE OF THE TOWER, VENICE  
*(Pastel)*



## VENICE

"I am at my work the first thing at dawn and the last thing at night." He could stand the Venetian crowd no better than any one else, and he worked as much as possible out of the windows. He did comparatively little from gondola or sandola. To the tourist, a gondola is a thing of joy; to the worker, it is a terribly unstable, unsatisfactory studio, and even in the old days it cost a hundred francs a month, but then, the gondolier was your slave. In choosing his subjects, he usually left the monuments of Venice, as of London, alone. In London he preferred Battersea and Wapping to Westminster and St. Paul's; in Venice little canals and *calli*, old doorways and gardens, beggars and bridges made a stronger appeal to him than churches and palaces, though there is the fine Nocturne of St. Mark's, as well as a few other exceptions. His interest was in the Venice of the Venetians as he saw it. M. Duret thinks he deliberately avoided subjects that Guardi and Canaletto had made their own, the great square with the Ducal Palace, the Cathedral, the Campanile. But subjects such as these, Whistler, as a rule, avoided everywhere. He was afterwards reproached for having turned his back upon the architectural glory of Venice. To reproduce the masterpieces of the master, he said, would be an impertinence.

Some say that Whistler first took rooms at the top of the Palazzo Rezzonico, the palace now owned by Mr. Barrett Browning. Mr. Ralph Curtis, who lived in Venice, thinks that "for a time Whistler had, as many did, one of the big rooms on the second floor of the Rezzonico as a studio." His only etching in the immediate neighbourhood is *The Palaces* made, not from an upper window, but from a *traghetto*, or the end of a near *calle*. Had he had rooms or a studio in the upper stories, there would most likely be some record of it from the windows. Mr. Forbes, also in Venice at the 1879]

## JAMES McNEILL WHISTLER

time, assures us that Whistler never lived there, and describes a little house in the heart of Venice, where "Maud" was with him, and where he started to paint a picture of a gondolier, who fell ill, which was a great blow to him. The doctor put the gondolier to bed, and bled him for pneumonia; Whistler came in and took heroic measures: milk punch and open windows. But the cure was slow. Whistler had to wait, and probably he never touched the canvas again. Mr. Otto Bacher writes of his quarters on the opposite side of the Grand Canal near the Frari. Mr. Bacher had arrived with Duveneck's other pupils in the summer of 1880, and he recalls his first impression of Whistler at the time:

"a curious, sailor-like stranger . . . short, thin and wiry, with a head that seemed large and out of proportion to the lithe figure. His large, wide-brimmed, soft, brown hat was tilted far back, and suggested a brown halo. It was a background for his curly black hair and singular white lock, high over his right eye, like a fluffy feather carelessly left where it had lodged. A dark, sack-coat almost covered an extremely low turned-down collar, while a narrow black ribbon did service as a tie, the long pennant-like ends of which, flapping about, now and then hit his single eye-glass."

Mr. Bacher also describes Whistler in evening dress with no tie at all: the peculiarity with which, of recent years, he had startled London. Mr. Forbes recalls his coming without one to the Bronsons where they met constantly, and Bronson saying it was sad to see artists so poor that they could not afford a necktie. We never knew Whistler, in the many years of our intimacy, to speak of himself as "Whistler," though Mr. Bacher makes him substitute "Whistler" for "I" in almost all their talks. So foolish an affectation seems to us little like Whistler.

Several of Duveneck's pupils were living in the Casa Jankovitz, the house that juts out squarely at the lower end

## VENICE

of the Riva degli Schiavoni, all Venice in front of it. Whistler was enchanted, and promptly moved there. He had one room, the two windows looking towards San Giorgio, the Salute and the Doge's Palace, and from these the etchings of the Riva and the lagoon, and the pastels of the same subjects were made. Many things are told of this one room in the Casa Jankovitz, of plates bitten on the top of the bureau, and acid running off, and the wild scramble to save his shirts from being ruined in the drawers beneath. Others, all true, are of the old printing press, on which Canaletto's plates were supposed to have been pulled and certainly many of Duveneck's and Bacher's were: the press which used to pull with difficulty up to a certain point, and then went with such a rush that it had to be stopped, for fear the bed would come out on the floor.

By this time he had found friends and enemies. There was a large colony of foreign artists and art lovers in Venice, and there was a club, English in name, really cosmopolitan, where he met Rico, Roussoff, Van Haanen, Tito, Blaas, if he had not already met them on the Piazza. Alexander, Rolshoven, as well as Bacher, among others, were with Duveneck. Harper Pennington joined them in the autumn, and Scott, Blum, Bunney, Jobbins, and Logsdaile were at work. The American Consul, Mr. Grist, and the Vice-Consul, Mr. Graham, were persons of importance, and the Consulate then, as ever, a meeting-place. Mrs. Bronson lived in the Casa Alvisi, the Brownings and the Curtises were in Venice, and with all three families Whistler became intimate. Londoners sometimes turned up. Mr. Harry Quilter tells of one encounter:

“ In the spring of 1880, I was, as usual in those days, in Italy, and spent a few weeks in Venice. I had been drawing for about five days, in one of the back canals, a specially beautiful doorway, when one morning I heard a sort of war-whoop, and there was

1880] 267

## JAMES McNEILL WHISTLER

Whistler, in a gondola, close by, shouting out, as nearly as I can remember: 'Hi! hi! What, what! Here, I say, you've got my doorway!'—'Your doorway? Confound your doorway! I replied, 'It's my doorway, I've been here for the last week.'—'I don't care a straw, I found it out first. I got that grating put up.'—'Very much obliged to you, I'm sure: it's very nice. It was very good of you.' And so for a few minutes we wrangled, but, seeing that the canal was very narrow, and that there was no room for two gondolas to be moored in front of the chosen spot, mine being already tied up exactly opposite, I asked him if he would not come and work in my gondola. He did so, and, I am bound to say, turned the tables on me cleverly. For, pretending not to know who I was, he described me to myself, and recounted the iniquities of the art critic of the *Times*, one 'Arry Quilter.'"

Whistler's struggle for bare existence and his pluck, are remembered by many. He was always poor at Venice, Mr. Forbes has told us, always borrowing money, and there was a very bad moment, when he used to say he had to live on "cat's meat and cheese parings." But even while gossip of his poverty was spreading there were dinners and Sunday breakfasts. Many were given in a little open-air *trattoria*, near the Via Garibaldi. The Panada, that noisiest of all noisy restaurants, was another of his haunts, and some of the men who were in Venice speak of a third, opposite the old post office. The Venetian food, nothing but fowl, as he described it to Mrs. William Whistler, tired him at first so much that he surprised himself by spending what seemed a fortune on tea, and carrying home strange pieces of fat, which he tried to boil into resemblance of the crisp slices of bacon served by Mrs. Cossens, his Chelsea housekeeper. Mr. Curtis remembers dinners in Whistler's rooms, so does Mr. Scott:

"If Whistler could not lay a table, he knew how to turn out tasty little dishes over a spirit-lamp; and it was not long before the inevitable Sunday breakfasts were instituted in that little room. *Polenta à l'Américaine*, which he had induced the land-



CALLE, VENICE  
*(Pastel)*



## VENICE

lady to prepare under his direction, we used to eat with such sort of treacle, alias golden syrup, as could be obtained. Fish was cheaper and more plentiful then than now in the Water City, and the lanky serving-women could fry with the best of the famous Ciozzotte. The 'thin red wine' of the country, in large flasks at about sixpence a quart, was plentiful, and these simple things, with the accompanying 'flow of soul,' made a feast for the gods. There was no room for many guests at one time, but Henry Woods, Ruben, W. Graham, Butler and Roussoff were often with us."

Days were spent in excursions to the Lido, and, doubtless, Chioggia, Murano, Burano and Torcello. These little journeys were far more costly and difficult then than now, and there are no plates except the *Murano Glass Furnace*, and no pastels, except one or two on the Lido, to show for them.

Best of all Whistler loved the nights at the never-closed clubs in the Piazza, at Florian's, and the Quadri, or sometimes at the Orientale on the Riva, where the coffee was just as good, and two *centessimi* cheaper. Around these nights endless legends are growing, and like the legends everywhere else, they are such a part of Whistler they cannot be passed over. No one loved them better than he, no one ever told them so well. They became the favourite "yarns" of Duveneck's "boys," to which we listened many an evening when we came to Venice four years later. It was then we first heard of Wolkoff, or Roussoff as he is known in Bond Street, and his boast that he could make pastels so like Whistler's that the difference could not be detected, and the American's bet of a "champagne dinner" that he couldn't, and the evening in the Casa Jankovitz, when Rico, Duveneck, Curtis, Bacher, Woods, Van Haanen, and De Blaas recognised Wolkoff's work at a glance, and every time one of his pastels was produced, cried in one voice: "Take it away!" The Russian said to Whistler after the dinner: "You know, you scratch a Russian, and you find a Tartar!"

1880] 269

## JAMES<sup>1</sup> McNEILL WHISTLER

—“Ha ha!” said Whistler, “I’ve scratched an artist and found an ama-Tartar!” Another “yarn” was of the tiny glass figure, or maybe, a little black baby from the shrine of St. Anthony in Padua, dropped into Whistler’s glass of water where it looked like a little devil bobbing up and down, so that Whistler, when he saw it, thought something might be wrong with his eyes, and sipped the water and shook the glass, and the more he sipped and shook, the more the little devil danced, and, finally, he upset the glass over everybody, and the little demon fell in his own lap. And there was another, of the night when a gondola, with a transparency showing Nocturnes and a band playing “Yankee-doodle,” moved up and down the Grand Canal and along the Riva, and never stopped until it was greeted with a loud “Ha ha!” from out the darkness of the shore. And we heard of the day when Whistler, seeing Bunney on a scaffold struggling with St. Mark’s, his life work for Ruskin, fastened a card, “I am totally blind,” on his back. And we were told too of the hot noon, when Whistler, leaning out of his window, discovered a bowl of goldfish far below on the window-ledge of his landlady, against whom he had an old grudge, let down a fishing-line, caught the goldfish, fried them, dropped them back into the bowl, and watched the return of their owner, who thought that her fish had been fried by the heat of the sun. Or it was the story of Blum and Whistler, without a *scai*, crossing the Academy Bridge, Blum sticking in his eye a little watch with a split second hand that went round so fast the keeper thought he had an “evil eye,” and they got over without paying; or of the “boys’” “farewell fête” to Whistler in August when there was rumour of his going, and in the coal barge, which Mr. Bacher’s description transforms into a “fairy-like floating bower festooned with the wealth of autumn,” the feast of melons and salads and Chianti was spread, and eaten as they

## VENICE

went up the Grand Canal with the tide, and the brilliancy of their Japanese lanterns brought every one to stare at them, until the rain drove them under the Rialto where the rest of the night was spent, and Whistler didn't go after all. When Whistler was really leaving, they say that he asked the authors of these and many adventures up to his room and showed them a number of prints, and said : " Now you boys have been very good to me during all this time, and I want to do something for you " ; and then he turned over the prints, one at a time carefully, and said : " and I have thought it out " ; and he took one, a spoiled one, and he counted their heads, and he cut it into as many pieces as there were people, and solemnly presented a fragment to each, and as they marched downstairs, all they heard was " Ha ha ! " These, and hundreds like them, are the legends you still listen to on the Piazza.

But Whistler left more than the memory of his gaiety with the friends he made in Venice. Two, Mr. Harper Pennington and Mr. Ralph Curtis, have sent us their impressions which we give here, without change or omission, though Mr. Curtis' letter does not end with the Venetian days. But to change or to omit would be to lessen the vividness of the impression.

Mr. Harper Pennington writes us :

" You know, he asked me to turn back when I was in Venice (for the first time, in September 1880), and come with him to London. I told him that I was not yet prepared for such a master : that I needed two years more, at least, to learn the mere dull rudiments, and to become familiar with everything I should avoid. ' Perhaps you are right,' he said reflectively, and *very slowly*, " but come to me by-and-by—don't put it off too long ! " He gave me many lessons there in Venice—real ones. He would hook his arm in mine, and take me off to look at some Nocturne that he was studying or memorising, and then he would show me how he went about to paint it, in the daytime. He let

## JAMES McNEILL WHISTLER

me—invited me, indeed, to stand at his elbow as he set down in colour some effect he loved from the natural thing in front of us. What became of many such—small canvases, all of them—I do not know. *The St. George Nocturne*, Canfield has. Who owns *The Façade of San Marco*? \*

“There was an upright sunset, too, looking from my little terrace on the Riva degli Schiavoni over towards San Giorgio—and others that I saw him work on in 1880. At last, my two years in Italy gone by, and a season in the studio of Carolus Duran superimposed, to find out his *cuisine*, I went to look for Jimmy in London, found him, and said: ‘Here I am!’”

Mr. Curtis gives details of another kind:

“You do me the honour of asking for my ‘impressions’ of Whistler. Off and on, for about twenty years, I had the good fortune of seeing him rather intimately in London, Paris and Venice. Those twenty years covered a multitude of vicissitudes in his career—semi-successes and partial defeats in London—his renaissance in Italy, his reinstalment in England, his coronation in Paris, and one may almost say his subsequent deification by every European denomination of the cult of art. *Malheur*, *bonheur*, Whistler conceding nothing—his attitude to art, to himself, to the public, and to his rivals, past and living, never changed. Applauded or booed, he ever remained with the same high æsthetic ideals, and the same shrewd eye to business. A rare combination. To us humble apostles of this faith, the master always seemed an ultra-exclusive aristocrat. In the Gotha of royalties of the profession, picturesquely few did he deign to recognise as ‘brothers.’ This ultra-fastidiousness was sincere. It also included, possibly, sentiments of self-defence—a sort of Monroe doctrine!

“Too self-reliant to be really jealous, he nevertheless constantly cultivated diplomacy. And in the broadest and best sense Whistler was a man of the world. For example, after the opening *soirée* of an International group at the Rue de Sèze, all but one of the exhibiting artists were standing about, Whistler seated, and punctuating his wit with flourishes of his famous wand, when the belated member stumbled in from a too good supper, and ventured: ‘*Ah, te voilà, mon vieux. On peut faire le charlatan*’

\* Mr. J. J. Cowan.

## VENICE

à Londres, mais ici, tu sais, ça ne prendra pas.' General consternation was relieved by the self-restrained reply : '*Ecoutez-moi bien, monsieur—dans mes voyages j'ai toujours remarqué, dans tous les pays, que les gentilshommes se grisent en gentilshommes, et les voyous en voyous. Allez, allez*' (with a wave of the wand). The blasphemer was hurried away, and the incident closed.

"Shortly before his return to England with portfolios of the famous etchings and delicious pastels, he gave his friends a tea-dinner. As seeing the best of his Venetian work was the real feast, the hour for the *hors d'œuvres*, consisting of sardines, hard-boiled eggs, fruit, cigarettes, and excellent coffee prepared by the ever-admirable Maud, was arranged for six o'clock. Effective pauses succeeded the presentation of each masterpiece, for with Japanese precision they had to be most carefully fixed in the one mount available. During these *entr'actes*, Whistler amused his guests with witty conjectures as to the verdict of the grave critics in London on 'these things.' One of his favourite types for sarcasm used to be the eminently respectable Londoner, who is '*always* called at 8.30, close-shaved at quarter to 9, and in the City at 10.' 'What will he make of *this*? Serve him right, too. Ha ha!'

"Whistler was a constant and ever-welcome guest at Casa Alvisi, the hospitable house of Mrs. Bronson, whom he often called *Santa Cattarina Seconda*. During happy years, from lunch till long past bed-time her house was the open rendezvous for the rich and poor—the famous and the famished—*les rois en exil* and the heirs-presumptive to the thrones of fame. Whistler there had his seat from the first, but to the delight of all he generally held the floor. One night, a curious contrast was the great and genial Robert Browning commenting on the projected form of a famous 'Jimmy letter' to the *World*. Those little arrows of wit, poisoned with veritable hellebore of sarcasm, were the result of infinite pains of gestation, pondered over, reformed, polished, and sharpened to the keenest edge. They might, better than by the Butterfly, have been signed by the symbol of the Wasp!

"Very late, on hot *sirocco* nights, long after the concert crowd had dispersed, one little knot of men might often be seen in the deserted Piazza San Marco, sipping refreshment in front of Florian's. You might be sure that was Whistler, in white duck, praising France, abusing England, and thoroughly enjoying

## JAMES McNEILL WHISTLER

Italy. He was telling how he had seen painting in Paris revolutionised by innovators of 'powerful handling': Manet, Courbet, Vollon, Regnault, Carolus Duran. He felt far more enthusiasm for the then recently resuscitated popularity of Velasquez and Hals.

"The *ars celare artem* of Terborgh and Vermeer always delighted him—the mysterious technique, the discreet distinction of execution, the 'one skin all over it,' of the minor masters of Holland was one of his eloquent themes. To Whistler it was a treat when a Frenchman arrived in Venice. If he could not like his paint, he certainly enjoyed his language. French seemed to give him extra exhilaration. From beginning to end, he owed much to the French for first recognising what he had learned from Japan.

"Was Whistler not the pioneer to graft on to the tired stump of Europe the vital shoots of Oriental Art? From Hiroshige especially he appears to have assimilated those nicely weighed laws of balance in design, the tender chord of colour and unconventional arrangements which have long since become vulgarised—even to the posters of *l'art nouveau*.

"Some Japanese delight in Whistler's tonalities, but are reserved as to the timidity of his drawing—innately sensitive to the fine beauty of line-rhythm in general composition, can we contend that he was often an accomplished draughtsman of detail? It is admitted that Whistler felt as few the supreme effect of an elegant silhouette, but it was only after hard work that he ever attained the purity of detail contour he so patiently aimed at. Witness the legs in the portrait of little *Miss Alexander*, which, nevertheless, posterity will perhaps pronounce his most perfect masterpiece.

"To continental comrades the American's mentality seemed far more Gallic than Anglo-Saxon—Parisians loved equally his sense of humour and his bump of combativity. They also relished his shafts of revenge at the artistic pretensions of the English, as compared with the national instincts of the French. Except for his exaggerated attitude during the Boer War, this revenge was atoned for by his equally deep gratitude to Paris, where, as a boy, his qualities had been at once recognised, and though he made, and lost, friends, money and notoriety in London, it was again Paris which gave him his official diplomas as one of the very greatest men of the day.

## VENICE

“Already posterity has corrected its rough proofs, and Whistler is henceforth classed as a classic. His delicate sense of order, proportion and spacing in pictorial composition was consistently carried out in the tidiness of all his surroundings and in the quaint coquetry of his dress, while even his most informal notes were invariably models of precise execution. Later, as a printer, he showed positive genius in personally supervising to the smallest minutiae the perfect presentation of his literary work, which remains, we are told, a model of faultless taste—*Taste* is probably the epitaph he himself would prefer. And by that hackneyed word, meaning perhaps the rarest quality in modern life, Whistler, of all others, seems unreservedly entitled to be characterised.”

## CHAPTER XXII. VENICE. THE YEAR EIGHTEEN SEVENTY-NINE TO EIGHTEEN EIGHTY CONTINUED

NOTHING in the various phases of Whistler's art is more astonishing than the storm of praise and abuse raised by the Venetian pastels, as will be seen when we come to their exhibition in London. Before this, when they were being done in Venice, the entire artistic community fought over them, for and against. To some, they were perfectly original, they expressed the character of Venice ; to others, they appeared cheap, anybody could do them. Both sides were wrong, as both sides always were about Whistler. "Anybody" cannot do them, and he had been making drawings of the kind ever since, if not before, the early days in Chelsea ; the subject, not the method, was new to him. Had some of the enthusiasts visited the collection of drawings in the Academy at Venice, they might have discovered his inspiration in the drawings of the Old Masters, where Whistler had found it years before at the Louvre. He was, as usual, inventing nothing, only carrying on tradition.

The method was simple. He drew on brown paper, sometimes taken from the grocer's or the colourman's parcel, putting in the composition with black chalk, and adding a few touches of colour. In this way, he made his studies for his pictures, especially for his classical subjects in the 'sixties, and a great number were in the possession of Mr. Thomas Way. The design for the mosaic for South Kensington, notes

## VENICE

of costumes for his sitters, decorative schemes, and scores of other subjects, many forgotten by him though they filled a large cabinet in the studio in the Rue Notre-Dame-des-Champs, and another in Fitzroy Street, were all done ten or fifteen years before he went to Venice. We do not know whether the little Chelsea shops belong to a later period. But to the day of his death he never gave up the method, and in his colour lithographs, he carried out the same idea. The early sketches on brown paper were mostly not known until the Memorial Exhibitions of his work. The few previously shown in London had attracted so little attention that he was generally believed to have taken up pastel in Venice, and to have made his wonderful drawings there without any technical preparation.

There were two reasons why Whistler used coloured papers for the pastels. One was that they gave him, without any work at all, the foundation of a colour-scheme which could be carried out in the simplest manner in the black chalk outline, and the few touches of pastel that completed the harmony. The other reason was that, having the sympathetic colour of the paper, he worked straight away on it, and did not ruin the surface and tire himself in getting the tone. When in Venice, Mr. Jobbins showed him some beautiful old brown, blue and pink paper, found in an old warehouse just off the Merceria, since cleared out, Whistler was completely equipped, not only with experience, but with better materials than he ever had before. It was natural that he should get to work in the way he had made his own. Mr. Bacher describes him in his gondola laden with pastels. But his materials were so few that, with them, he could wander on foot in the narrow streets, the best way to work, as every one who has lived in Venice knows. For it is far from easy to find again a place come upon by chance, and it is virtually impossible ever to

1880]

## JAMES McNEILL WHISTLER

see again the effect that has fascinated you. He carried only a little portfolio or drawing-board, some sheets of tinted paper, black chalk, half a dozen pastels, and varnished or silver-coated paper to place over the drawing, when finished. When he once found what he wanted, he made his sketch in black chalk, and then just hinted, but beautifully, the colour of the old walls, the green shutters, the brilliant spots of the women's dresses: the colour put in as in a mosaic or stained glass, mostly a flat tint, the pastel between the black lines. He always remembered the limitations of the medium and never attempted to paint with his stick of colour, using greater pressure to obtain greater brilliancy and less for his more delicate tones, but keeping his colour pure and fresh, as you can see in the "foolish sunsets" he sometimes did in Venice, though rarely afterward. The surprise was that it could be so simple, so easy—"only the doing it was the difficulty," he would say. It is doubtful if he ever worked more than a day on any one subject. It is almost certain that he finished each before he left the place. People were not often given the chance to learn much about Whistler's methods, or to know what he was doing. But when he finished a series of these Venetian drawings, the fact did become known, and he gave an exhibition of them in the club at Venice. He showed them also at Mrs. Bronson's, and in his room. After the Sunday breakfast, Mr. Scott writes:

"The latest pastels used to be brought out for inspection. Whistler would always show his sketches in his own way, or not at all. In the absence of a proper easel and a proper light, they were usually laid on the floor."

The "painter fellows" were startled by the brilliancy of the pastels, Whistler said, and he told his mother that he thought rather well of them himself.

The drawing in many has been praised with the reckless



MARBLE PALACE, VENICE  
(*Pastel*)



## VENICE

inconsequence characteristic of most of the praise bestowed on Whistler's work. The drawing is often either not good in itself, or so slight as to be of little importance. The beauty is altogether in the suggestion of colour, the arrangement of lines that he hints at. It is all suggestion. Though he passed the spring, summer, winter, and part of two autumns in the city, there is no attempt, save in some of the sunsets, to give atmospheric effects, or the effect of the season, of the time of the year. What he saw that pastel would do, what he made it do, was to record certain lines and to suggest certain colours. Critics and artists, having at that time never studied pastel, were unaware of what had been done in the medium. In fact, the revival in the art of drawing in pastel did not come for some years after Whistler showed his Venetian series, when there was a "boom" all over the world, and pastel societies were started, most of which have since collapsed.

The "boom" in etching commenced ten or twelve years before Whistler went to Venice. If nothing was known till then of the possibilities of etching, much was known of its history. There were accepted standards: Rembrandt, Haden, Méryon. Whistler had already accomplished great things, done after a more or less definite formula laid down by Dürer, Rembrandt and Hollar. Therefore, when he produced etchings which struck the uncritical, and even those who cared, as something new and untried, the uncritical were shocked because their preconceived notions were upset, and those who cared were astonished. The difference between the Venetian and the London plates was, Mr. Duret says, so great that the two series might be attributed to two men. This was due partly to the difference between London and Venice seen by an artist sensitive to the character of places, but more to the difference of technique between the earlier and the later plates. Not so  
1880]

## JAMES McNEILL WHISTLER

many years ago, talking to him about this subject, we said that the Venetian plates seemed to be executed in an absolutely new and original technique. It so happened that the *Adam and Eve*, *Old Chelsea*, and *The Traghetto* were, as they are now, hanging almost side by side on our walls. In a five minutes' demonstration he proved one to be but the outgrowth of the other, and had he carried the demonstration further back, he could have proved that both, as we can now see, grew out of *The Coast Survey* plate, and that there was a natural and logical growth all the way through. Until the London Memorial Exhibition of his work, it was impossible to trace this growth, because the prints were never before hung together chronologically. Even the Grolier Club, in New York, was forced, for want of space, to make two separate shows. Before Whistler exhibited his Venetian plates, even artists knew nothing but the *French Set* and the *Thames Set*. The intermediate stages in the gradual development were not known, and the Venetian plates seemed a new thing. But the only difference between these and the Thames series is entirely one of development. Whistler always spoke of the *Black Lion Wharf* as boyish, though it is impossible to conceive of anything in its way more complete in drawing. His estimate of it has been accepted by many. Mr. Bernhard Sickert, in writing of the plate, thinks it misleading to say that every tile, every beam has been drawn. "These details are merely filled in with a certain number of strokes of a certain shape, accepted as indicating the materials of which they are constructed." When an etching is in pure line and owes little to the printer, as in this case, it is the wonderful arrangement of lines, the wonderful lines themselves, which make you feel that everything, every beam and every tile, has been drawn; that every detail actually has been drawn, we did not suppose anybody would be so absurd as to imagine. The character of the

## VENICE

lines gives you this impression, which is exactly what the artist wanted. It has been said by another critic that Whistler exhausted all his blacks on the houses. He did nothing of the sort. He concentrated them there, and did not take away from the interest of the wharf he was drawing by an equal elaboration in the boats, the barges, and the figures. As he grew older and practised more, he gave up his literal, definite, firm method of work. Instead of drawing the panes of a window in firm outline, for instance, he suggested them by drawing the shadows and the reflected light with short crisp strokes, and scarcely any outline at all. In the *Black Lion Wharf*, he got the light and shade on his building by different bitings. In Venice, it was done by suggesting the shadows. In both series, the small figures in movement are nearly the same, but there is a great advance in the drawing in the Venice plates, where they are simply indicated to give the idea of motion and life. If you compare the *Millbank* and the *Lagoon*, you find in both the subject, or the dominating lines in the subject, to be the same, a series of posts carrying the eye from the foreground to the extreme distance, but their treatment in the Venetian plate is far more direct and expressive. Simplicity of expression has never been carried further. Probably the finest plate, in its simplicity and directness, is *The Bridge*. Whistler now obtained the same quality of richness by his manner of suggesting detail, and also by his printing. In *The Traghetto* in Venice, there is the same scheme as in the early prints of *The Miser* and *The Kitchen*, but the Venice plate is more painter-like in quality. Without taking away from the etched line, he has given a fulness of tone which makes the background of *The Burgomaster Six* seem weak in comparison.

He was now doing his own printing for the first time to any extent. There were a hundred prints of the first *Series of Twelve* in Venice. Of a few plates, the prints were not  
1880]

## JAMES McNEILL WHISTLER

all pulled by him, and the difference between his printing and Goulding's is unmistakable. In the hand of any professional printer, save Mr. Goulding, plates like *The Traghetto* and *The Beggars* would be a mass of scratches, though scratches of interest to the artist; it required Whistler's skill as a printer to bring out what he wanted, and to make them what they are. And it was the more surprising that he could develop his printing as he did in Venice, because the conditions were so primitive. Mr. Bacher had a portable press which interested him, but most of his printing was done on the old press to which we have referred. Whistler vehemently protested, as we often heard him, against the printer, his pot of treacle and his couches of ink. But no great artist ever carried the printing of etchings further than he, or ever made such use of printer's ink as he did in some of these plates. Without the wash of ink, all it is however, they would be the faintest ghosts of themselves, with no interest, and he was justified in using ink as he wished, when it made his proof better. And he used it in all sorts of ways on the same plates, to try endless experiments with ever-varying results, even to cover up the rather weak lines of an indifferent design, as in *Nocturne—Palaces*, prized highly by collectors, but one of his poorest plates. It and *The Garden, Nocturne—Shipping*, and one or two besides are by no means equal to the others. But there are no such perfect plates in the world as *The Beggars*, *The Traghetto*, the two *Rivas* and *The Bridge*.

Mr. Frank Short has written us an interesting note on Whistler as printer, and since it relates partly to the Venetian plates and to his methods when he printed them, it can appropriately be quoted here :

“ I am very bad at remembering dates, &c., but my acquaintance with Whistler began about 1885. We used in those days to send things that were going to exhibitions, the day before sending

## VENICE

in, to the Hogarth Club, and an etching of mine was there that Whistler liked ; and next day he came to my very small studio in Chelsea to tell me so, and gave me at the same time a ticket for his *Ten o'Clock*. I always look upon this visit as an exceedingly kind thing for him to do. After that, when I had a studio in the Wentworth Yard, he often came in to talk on technical matters in etching, &c., and sometimes brought in a batch of plates for me to lay rebiting grounds for him. I never remember laying a first ground for him ; but he several times asked me to take out or lighten lines on plates, which I did. I must have had a considerable number, one time and another, but I cannot recall which they were. He used occasionally to come in to prove a plate and a good many of the Venice plates were defaced in my studio (with the heaviest needles I could find him), and a couple of proofs were taken with the scratches on. I never printed an edition with him. The last time he printed with me was in July 1900, when he came down here [Brook Green] with nine or ten plates, and we printed a few proofs of each. Some of these plates were slight, but several carried a good way.\* He, as usual, worked a little in dry-point between each proof. I think he intended coming to print, &c., a good deal at this time, but I think he got ill. I remember he said the 'etching fit' was on him again. I think he liked some one to print with him—some one that he could leave the ink and the press to, and be only concerned himself with the wiping. I was always a little surprised that he left the ink mixing to me—'Make it your own way,' he would say, 'a dark *nutty* brown.' He said he had come to the conclusion that too brown (or too light) an ink was an affectation.

"I think he knew that I was always delighted to give him any help I could ; but yet he was careful to bring me a proof, now and again, that he thought I should like. I remember he insisted on the Fine Art Society giving me a proof of one of the Venice plates, because I lacquered the plates when they were defaced. He said : 'I have told them they must let you choose a proof, so you must go up and choose one.' I did—one of the best proofs of *The Traghetto* I know !

"As to the printing : when with me he *always* kept the plate slightly warm in the usual manner. If he was using very weak

\* These were the last Paris plates.

## JAMES McNEILL WHISTLER

ink, I daresay he would work with a cold plate, as one sometimes does. Also, he always left his plate rag-wiped, but, as years went on, he seemed more and more particular to get the surface as clean as possible (with the muslin). His continual grumble was 'not clean enough.' As for *retroussage*, he would have none of it. So that (and this I like to think) his printing was perfectly simple. I remember once, with a much under-bitten plate, I suggested hand-wiping. He said: 'Well, I have done that sometimes,' and proceeded to do it: but he had just before been putting on dry-point and hadn't taken off the burr which, of course, shouted out with the hand-wiping; and he said, it won't do, and finished again with the muslin. Nevertheless, I could have got a better proof off *that* plate with the hand!"

While printing, Whistler was continually working on his plates, which accounts for the extraordinary variety existing in different examples of the same etching. A curious fact about *The Traghetto* and *The Beggars* is that, of each, there were two plates. He was displeased with the first *Traghetto*, and etched it over again, and the same thing must have happened to *The Beggars*. Mr. Bacher writes that *The Traghetto* "troubled him very much." He pulled one fine proof and then overworked the plate so that he had to prepare a second one. He had another copper of the same size and thickness made by the Venetian from whom they all got their plates. When this was ready, the first plate was inked with white paint, instead of black ink, passed through the press, and a proof pulled. This was placed on the second plate, already varnished, which was then run through the press. The result was "a replica in white upon the black etching ground." Mr. Bacher says that upon the new plate Whistler worked for days and weeks with the first proof before him, that he might find and etch only the lines in the original.

"The printing of this plate was an exciting moment. As the gentle old printer of Venice pulled the plate through the

## VENICE

massive wooden rollers, heavily padded with felt blankets nothing was heard but the squeaking of the old wooden press. It was the supreme moment of joy or of keen disappointment—it was the end of the journey and, fortunately, the new proof was exquisite. It was another *Traghetto*, the one we now know, but it was not a duplicate of that marvellous first proof. Whistler placed the two proofs side by side and minutely compared them.”

And he was pleased, for the examination ended in the one song he allowed himself in Venice :

“ We don’t want to fight,  
But, by jingo ! if we do,  
We’ve got the ships,  
We’ve got the men,  
And got the money too-oo-oo ! ”

The first proofs of other plates, we believe, were very unsatisfactory. Each proof, therefore, was a trial, and, as each was pulled, he worked upon the plate, not, of course, taking out large slabs or putting in new passages to make quite a new state of it, but strengthening lines or lightening them, giving richness to a shadow or modelling to a little figure. It would be impossible, if you had not the hundred proofs of one of these Venetian plates by you, to say how much he did do or what he did in each, but the first proof is absolutely different from the last, and probably no two are alike. Some of them, from the veriest ghost, became the richest, fullest prints.

In his Venice etchings, Whistler also developed what he called the Japanese method of drawing, Bacher calls his secret, and Menpes the secret of drawing. Whistler always spoke frankly about it to us, from the first time J. saw him etching, and he followed the same method in his lithographs. In etching or lithography, where it is difficult to make corrections, and where the surface of the plate or the stone should not be disturbed, it is not easy, by the ordinary manner in which drawing is taught, to put a complicated design on the

1880]

## JAMES McNEILL WHISTLER

plate properly, without elaborate spacing, tracing, or a preliminary sketch. Frequently, when the design is half made in the usual fashion, the artist finds that the point of greatest interest, the subject of his picture, will not come on the plate where he wants it. The Japanese always seem to get the design in their colour-prints in the right place, and yet their technique adds to the difficulty of changing or altering a design, especially in their prints. But whether this is because they have the method of drawing Whistler attributed to them, whether he got his idea from Japanese prints or evolved it, we do not know. We do know that the idea was his long before he painted the "Japanese pictures." You can see the beginning of it in the *Isle de la Cité*, and *Fumette's Bent Head*, and the unfinished *Temple Bar*. The system, scientific as all his systems were, is this : to select the exact spot on the canvas, the lithographic stone, the etching plate, or the piece of paper, where the centre of interest is to be, and to draw this part of his subject. It might be somewhat near the side of a plate, though he insisted that the composition should always be placed well within the frame or the plate, contrary as such treatment is to Japanese methods and his own early practice. As we have already pointed out, in the early paintings, sprays of flowers, or branches of trees run into the picture to give the impression that it is carried beyond the frame, as is done repeatedly in Japanese art. But his theory, perfected before the Venetian period and adhered to as long as he lived, was that everything of any interest should be well within the frame or plate mark, as far within as the subject was from him. Having then selected the point of principal interest, he drew that, and drew it completely, and there, on his plate, or his stone, was a picture. It might be, as Mr. Menpes says, a distant view of palaces and the shipping beneath a bridge ; in London it was frequently a shop window ; in Paris, a dark

286 [1880

## VENICE

doorway ; in portraits, the sitter's head. Whatever it was, once he had put it down, he drew in the surrounding objects, or those next in importance, all the while carrying out the work completely and making it into one harmonious whole. The result was that the picture was finished—"finished from the beginning"—and there was always about it, on the plate, paper or stone, a space which he could fill up with less important details, or leave as he chose. With his painting, it was a different problem. When the subject was arranged, it grew together, all over at the same time. But, in some of the earlier pictures, *Old Battersea Bridge*, for example, a piece of canvas seems to have been added, though he maintained that the artist should confine himself to the size of the canvas he selected, and not get over his blunders, as so many do, by adding to, or taking from it. All this requires the greatest care in just what Whistler considered so important, the placing of the subject. Working in this manner, always with the completed picture before him, he could return to it again and add further work, if he thought it was needed, knowing he had his subject down. It sounds simple, so simple that one day, when he had been explaining it to Mr. E. A. Walton, and the latter said : " But there is no secret ! " Whistler's answer was : " Yes, there is, the secret is in doing it." It is just this, in the doing it, that the excellence of his work lies. As a matter of fact, it is difficult to restrain one's self to drawing completely the heart of a subject, while, in painting, still more restraint is necessary the restraint imposed by colour.

Besides etchings and pastels, Whistler made water-colours in Venice, but as they were never all shown together, it is impossible to say how many ; and there were a few oils. The most important is *Nocturne, Blue and Gold, St. Mark's*, exhibited at the British Artists' and the London Memorial Exhibition, to which it was lent by Mr. J. J. Cowan. Mr.  
1880]

## JAMES McNEILL WHISTLER

Bacher speaks of one from the windows of the Casa Jankovitz, "the Salute and a great deal of sky and water, with the buildings very small," and of a third, a scene at night, from a *café* near the Royal Gardens. Mr. Forbes recalls another, a *Nocturne of the Giudecca*, with shipping, on a panel, which Whistler gave to Mr. Jobbins, who, as he told us himself, thought so little of it that he painted a sketch on the back, and then sold it to Mr. Forbes, who still has it. Doubtless there were others, but we know of none that were included in exhibitions and catalogues, and can so be identified.

PORTRAIT OF SIR HENRY IRVING AS PHILIP OF SPAIN

*Arrangement in Black No. III.*



ETCHING OF HENRY IRVING





## CHAPTER XXIII. BACK IN LONDON. THE YEARS EIGHTEEN EIGHTY TO EIGHTEEN EIGHTY-ONE

**B**Y the end of November 1880, Whistler was in London again. "Years of battle," M. Duret calls the period that followed, and Whistler had come back prepared for the fight.

He arrived when the Fine Art Society least expected him. A show of Twelve Great Etchers had opened, a press was in the gallery, Mr. Goulding was giving practical demonstrations of printing, etching was "upon the town."

"Well, you know, I was just home—nobody had seen me—and I drove up in a hansom. Nobody expected me. In one hand, I held my long cane; with the other, I led by a ribbon a beautiful little white Pomeranian dog—it too, had turned up suddenly. As I walked in, I spoke to no one, but putting up my glass, I looked at the prints on the wall. 'Dear me! dear me!' I said, 'still the same old sad work! Dear me!' And Haden was there, talking hard to Brown, and laying down the law—and as he said 'Rembrandt,' I said 'Ha ha!' and he vanished, and then——!"

He was without house and studio, and lived in Wimpole Street with his brother until he took lodgings in Langham Street and then in Alderney Street.\* He at once set to work printing the hundred sets of the twelve plates, for few had been pulled in Venice. The Fine Art Society moved the press to a room upstairs, over their shop, and here old friends came

\* The record of this is in the etching published in the *Gazette des Beaux-Arts*, April 1891.  
1880]

## JAMES McNEILL WHISTLER

to see him, W. M. Rossetti and Pellegrini especially remembered among the many, and here Mr. Mortimer Menpes says, he first met Whistler, and, dropping Poynter, South Kensington and his own ambition, hastened to throw himself at the feet of "the master" and inscribe himself a pupil. It was not an ideal workshop, and the Fine Art Society took two rooms for Whistler in Air Street, Regent Street, on the first floor of a house with a bow window looking out under the colonnade: the window from which he etched the plate of the now demolished Quadrant.

According to Mr. T. R. Way, he and his father often came to Air Street to help Whistler with the printing. The press was in the front room, and Mr. Way made a sketch of it in colour, his father damping the paper, Whistler inking a plate, the press between them; an interesting document, for in this little room a number of prints for the *Series of Twelve Etchings* were pulled. The work was interrupted by occasional excitements. Mr. Way says, one day Whistler placed on his heater a bottle of nitric acid and water tightly stopped up. The stopper blew out, steaming acid fumes filled the room, and they had to run for their lives into a bedroom where Whistler never seems to have slept. Another time, they took corrosive sublimate, or something as deadly, to get the dried ink from the lines of plates not properly cleaned in Venice, and they dropped the corrosive sublimate on the floor, and, Mr. Way adds, there was not much left of the carpet. Why anything was left of the floor or of themselves is a mystery. Then, Mr. Menpes says:

"Whistler drifted into a room in my own house, which I had fitted up with printing materials, and it was in this little printing-room of mine that most of the series of Venetian etchings were printed."

The edition of a hundred sets was, however, not completed

## BACK IN LONDON

during Whistler's lifetime. It was only after his death that Mr. Goulding finished the work.

The first series of Venetian plates was exhibited in December 1880, and hung by themselves in the Middle Room at the Fine Art Society's. The *Twelve* were selected from the forty plates Whistler brought back with him. The critics could see nothing in them. The *Academy* thought that they might have been enjoyed at home, but to make of them an exhibition was a mistake. *Truth* dismissed them as "another crop of Whistler's little jokes." They did not represent any Venice that the *Times* cared to remember, "for who wants to remember the degradation of what has been noble, the foulness of what has been fair?" They were "too slight in execution and unimportant in size" to satisfy the *World*. One after another, the popular authorities repeated the Attorney-General's decision that Whistler was amusing, and Burne-Jones' regret that he had not fulfilled his early promise. Whistler carefully collected the criticisms for future use, though one of them he answered immediately, the *World's*:

"Seriously, then, my Atlas, an etching does not depend, for its importance, upon its size. 'I am not arguing with you—I am telling you.' . . . Be severe with your man. Tell him his 'job' should be 'neatly done.' I could cut my own throat better; and if need be, in case of his dismissal, I offer my services. Meanwhile, yours joyously."

"What a funny dog it is!" was the editorial comment, and the public endorsed it.

Mr. Brown, of the Fine Art Society, was going to New York before Christmas, and it was arranged that he should take with him a set of the *Twelve*. Whistler spent a Sunday pulling prints for the purpose, Mr. Brown at his side, the press never left, except for a sandwich. The journey was not a success. The etchings were no more appreciated or

1880]

## JAMES McNEILL WHISTLER

wanted in New York than in London. Only eight sets were ordered.

In the meanwhile, Whistler was preparing for his show of pastels.

“Jimmy called—as self-reliant and sure as ever, full of confidence in the superlative merit of his pastels, which we are to go and see,”

is Mr. Alan S. Cole's note of Whistler's first visit after his return (January 2, 1881). This show also was at the Fine Art Society's. Whistler designed the frames; he saw to the catalogue, which had the brown paper cover but not quite the form eventually adopted, and was printed by Mr. Way; he decorated the gallery, an arrangement in gold and brown, which was enjoyed as “another of his little jokes” by the critics on press day (January 28). Godwin was one of the few who admitted its beauty, and his description in the *British Architect* (February 1881) has the value of a contemporary record:

“First, a low skirting of yellow gold, then a high dado of dull yellow green cloth, then a moulding of green gold, and then a frieze and ceiling of pale reddish brown. The frames are arranged on the line; but here and there one is placed over another. Most of the frames and mounts are of rich yellow gold, but a dozen out of the fifty-three are in green gold, dotted about with a view of decoration, and eminently successful in attaining it.”

On the evening of the press view, Mr. Cole says:

“Whistler turned up for dinner very full of his private view to-morrow. Later on, we concocted a letter inviting Prince Teck to come to it. His last draft was all right, but he would insist on beginning it ‘Prince,’ although I assured him ‘Sir’ was the usual way of addressing him in a letter.”

The private view, the next day (January 29), was a crush, Bond Street blocked with carriages, the sidewalk crowded

## BACK IN LONDON

with people struggling to get in. Nothing like the excitement was ever known at the Fine Art Society's. Millais, giving an exhibition in the adjoining room, was one of the first to see the pastels. "Magnificent, fine—very cheeky—but fine!" he was heard to say in his big voice, and afterwards he wrote to Whistler to tell him so, and the letter pleased Whistler. The crowd did not know what to say, and, had they known, would have been afraid to say it. For Whistler was there, his laugh louder, shriller, than ever. He let no one forget the trial. An admirer asked the price of a pastel, and when told, exclaimed: "Sixty guineas! That's enormous!" Whistler heard, though he was not meant to; he always heard everything. "Ha ha! Enormous! why not at all! I can assure you it took me quite half an hour to draw it!"

People laughed at Whistler's work, because they thought laughter was what he expected of them. Because he was the gayest man who ever lived, they refused to see that he was also the most serious artist: the combination bewildered them. When they treated his art as part of his gaiety, it hurt, for he was acutely sensitive, but he had his revenge by mystifying them still further:

"Well, you know they thought it was an amiability to me for them to be amused. One day, when I was on my way to the Fine Art Society's, while the show was going on, I met Sir and Lady —, face to face, at the door, as they were coming out. Both looked very much bored, but they couldn't escape me. So the old man grasped my hand and chuckled: 'We have just been looking at your things, and have been so much amused!' He had an idea that the drawings on the wall were drolleries of some sort, though he could not understand why, and that it was his duty to be amused. I laughed with him. I always did with people of that kind, and then they said I was not serious."

A shriek of execration went up from the press. The critics  
1881] 293

## JAMES McNEILL WHISTLER

too, laughed, but there was venom in their laughter. They liked to take themselves, if they couldn't take Whistler, seriously, and they hated work they could not understand. The pastels were sensational, Whistler was clever, with "a sort of transatlantic impudence." They objected to the brown paper, to the technique, to the frames, to the decorations, to the subjects ; they became unexpectedly concerned for the past glory of Venice. Godwin again was an exception.

"No one who has listened, as the writer of those brief little notes has, to Whistler's graphic descriptions of the fairy-like, open arcaded, winding staircase that lifts its tall stem far into the blue sky, or of the remarkable façades, yet unrestored, that speak of the art power of the Venetian architect, can doubt that he who can so remember and describe has failed to admire. It is by reason of the strength of this admiration and high appreciation that he holds back in reverence, and exercises this reticence of the pencil, the needle and the brush."

A number of people expressed their belief in the pastels by buying them, and the show was a success financially. The prices ranged from twenty to sixty guineas, the total receipts amounted to eighteen hundred. Mr. Bacher quotes a letter written to him just after the show opened and signed "Maud Whistler" :

"The best of it is, all the pastels are selling. Four hundred pounds' worth the first day, now over a thousand pounds' worth are sold."

Before the exhibition closed, at the end of January, Whistler was summoned to Hastings. His mother had been living there since her illness of 1876-77, from which she never entirely recovered, but there were often long intervals between the attacks when her family had no immediate cause for anxiety. In the end her death was sudden. Those who refused to see in Whistler any other good quality could not deny his devotion to his mother ; those to whom he revealed

## BACK IN LONDON

the tenderness, under the defiant masque with which he faced the world, knew what his love for her meant to him. She had lived with him whenever it was possible. His visits and letters to Hastings had been frequent. He never forgot her birthday. He told her of all his success, all his hopes, and made as light to her as he could of his debts and disappointments. But in the miserable week before the funeral at Hastings, he was full of remorse ; he should have been kinder and more considerate, he said ; he had not written often enough from Venice. Dr. Whistler was with him part of the time, and the Doctor's wife throughout the long week. In the afternoons they would wander together on the windy cliffs above the town, and there was one grey, miserable afternoon when he broke down utterly. " It would have been better," he regretted, " had I been a parson as she wished ! " He had nothing to reproach himself with. The days in Chelsea were for her as happy as for him, and she whose pride had been in his first childish promise at St. Petersburg lived to see the full development of his genius. She was buried at Hastings.

It was fortunate for him that, when he got back to town, events to distract his thoughts from his grief followed fast. The new Society of Painter-Etchers had arranged to open their first exhibition in April at the Hanover Gallery. American artists who were just starting etching, and had never shown prints in London, were invited. Mr. Frank Duveneck, one of them, sent a series of Venetian prints. This was the occasion of " the storm in an æsthetic teapot " which, had not Whistler thought it important as " history," would now be forgotten. We quote, as he did, from *The Cuckoo* (April 11, 1881) :

" Some etchings, exceedingly like Mr. Whistler's in manner, but signed ' Frank Duveneck,' were sent to the Painter-Etchers' Exhibition from Venice. The Painter-Etchers appear to have

1881]

## JAMES MCNEILL WHISTLER

suspected for a moment that the works were really Mr. Whistler's ; and, not desiring to be the victims of an easy hoax on the part of that gentlemen, three of their members—Dr. Seymour Haden, Dr. Hamilton and Mr. Legros—went to the Fine Art Society's Gallery in Bond Street, and asked one of the assistants there to show them some of Mr. Whistler's Venetian plates. From this assistant they learned that Mr. Whistler was under an arrangement to exhibit and sell his Venetian etchings only at the Fine Art Society's Gallery."

Whistler heard of this. On March 18 he called on Mr. Cole, who found him "highly incensed with Haden and Legros conspiring to make out he was breaking his contract with the Fine Art Society." In his first indignation, Whistler went straight to the Hanover Gallery, Mr. Menpes with him, but the three members were not to be found there. Haden then wrote to the Fine Art Society that they knew all about Mr. Duveneck, and were delighted with his etchings, and he expressed regret. But it is incredible that two etchers like Haden and Legros could have mistaken the work of Duveneck for that of Whistler.

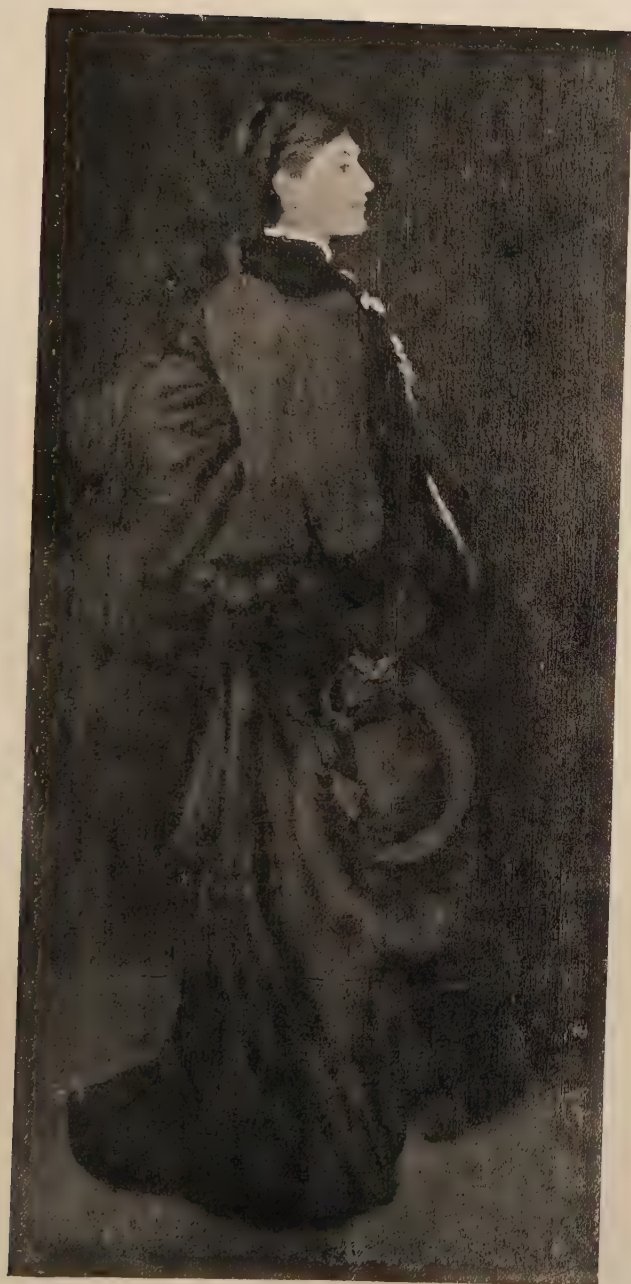
Whistler published the whole story in a pamphlet called *The Piker Papers*. Piker was the name of a newsagent who had become involved. With its interest a little dulled by time, the correspondence may be read in *The Gentle Art*.

Whistler had not forgotten the pictures left, before the bankruptcy, with Mr. Graves in Pall Mall. By degrees he bought them back. When Mr. Algernon Graves consulted his father about letting Whistler have the pictures upon which the full amount was not paid, as well as the Nocturnes, for three of which Whistler had repaid a hundred pounds, the father said : "Let him take the whole lot, and don't be a fool ; the pictures aren't worth twenty-five pounds apiece." The *Rosa Corder* was sold at Christie's with Howell's other effects, Mr. Algernon Graves agreeing that, if it brought more than the money Howell owed the firm, Howell's executors





SKETCH OF "ROSA CORDER"  
(*Pen and Ink*)



ROSA CORDER  
*(Arrangement in Black and Brown)*



## BACK IN LONDON

could have the balance. The father maintained the picture wouldn't fetch ten pounds, but it brought more than the amount of their bill, some hundred and thirty pounds. The *Irving* was sold to Sir Henry for a hundred pounds, and the *Miss Franklin* went to Messrs. Dowdeswell. Whistler continued to pay his bills regularly as they came due, to Graves' great astonishment; there was only one exception and then Whistler came down to ask to have the payment postponed, and this was not settled until long after the pictures were in Whistler's possession. When Whistler paid the final sum, Mr. Graves expressed his surprise. But Whistler said:

"You have been a very good friend to me—in fact you have been my banker. You have acted honourably to me in the whole matter. I meant to pay, and I have done so."

These business details and his own exhibitions left Whistler no time to think of the annual shows of 1881. He had nothing in the Salon, and in the Grosvenor only *Miss Alexander*, painted and exhibited in London years before. In the autumn, however, borrowing the *Mother* from Mr. Graves, he sent it to the Academy in Philadelphia, the arrangements being made for him by Mrs. Anna Lea Merritt. She writes us:

"In the autumn of 1881, I was asked by the Pennsylvania Academy of Fine Arts to receive pictures by American artists, and have them forwarded for exhibition, and especially they entreated me to persuade Mr. Whistler to send a picture. He had never been represented in any American exhibition. I obtained a chance, when meeting him at a dinner, of pressing the subject more vigorously than I could have done by writing, and he promised to send his mother's portrait. It was collected in due course and deposited in my studio, then in the 'Avenue.' Mr. Whistler came immediately after and as the canvas was breaking away from the stretcher, he directed the packing agents who were skilful frame makers, to restrain it and then left me.

## JAMES McNEILL WHISTLER

As soon as the canvas was made tight, spots of crushed varnish appeared on the surface. The varnish, in fact, broke or crumbled and I feared the canvas might have broken. I flew down the street, overtook him, and brought him back, dreading that he would blame us and even that some injury had been done. To my surprise, he took the misfortune with perfect composure and kindness, and stippled the spots with some solvent varnish that soon restored the even surface. And there was never a word of suggestion that we had done any harm. Of course, I knew the fault was not in anything that had been done, and it was by his own order, but from all I had heard about him I trembled. The greatest difficulty in connection with that exhibition was to persuade him to journey to the American Consulate in St. Helen's Place and make his affidavit for the invoice. It had to be done by himself and it was not pleasant, as we know, to waste a day, the very middle of the day, in this dull declaration of American citizen sojourning in England. After the cases were ready for shipment, there was still delay to get this task accomplished, and I think the Pennsylvania Academy hardly guess how much persuading it took. What a pity they did not secure the beautiful picture for his own country. Now that it hangs in the Luxembourg, they envy it."

The *Mother* was exhibited in two or three other American cities before it was returned, in June 1882, and could have been bought for twelve hundred dollars. Although it did not fetch this trumpery price, it stimulated interest in the artist and in his etchings when they were shown in several American galleries. Societies of etchers were at this period being formed by American artists, and exhibitions of etchings organised in the principal towns. There was a show of American etchings in the Boston Museum of Fine Arts in 1881, another in 1882 in the New York Etching Club, while the Philadelphia Society of Etchers gave in this year its first international exhibition. Haden, encouraged by Mr. Frederick Keppel, came to the United States to lecture on etching. Articles in *Scribner's* on Whistler and Haden, helped to increase the interest. We remember the excitement made by Haden's lectures which

## BACK IN LONDON

prepared the public for a more critical study of Whistler, whose prints were in both the New York and Philadelphia Exhibitions. Mr. Claghorn, almost the only Philadelphian who then cared for etchings, had already collected Whistler's prints. Mr. Avery, in New York, had some years before begun his collection and secured for it many of the rarest proofs, and he was followed by Mr. Howard Mansfield. But, generally speaking, in America more had been heard of Whistler's eccentricities than of his work. It could, however, no longer remain unknown, once his etchings and the portrait of the *Mother* were seen, and *The White Girl* was lent to the Metropolitan Museum in New York, where it hung for some time. And, gradually the young men who had been with him in Venice, coming back, helped to spread his fame at home, and, when Americans got to know his work, they became the keenest to possess it.

## CHAPTER XXIV. THE JOY OF LIFE. THE YEARS EIGHTEEN EIGHTY-ONE TO EIGHTEEN EIGHTY-FOUR

**O**N May 26, 1881, Mr. Alan S. Cole

“met Jimmie, who is taking a new studio in Tite Street, where he is going to paint all the fashionables—views of crowds competing for sittings—carriages along the streets.”

It was at No. 13, close to the White House. Whistler decorated it with a scheme of yellow : one felt in it as if standing inside an egg, Howell said. He again picked up blue and white, and old silver ; he again gave his Sunday breakfasts, and they again became the talk of the town, and he the fashion. If the town was determined to talk, Whistler was determined it should have good reason. He was never so malicious, never so extravagant, never so “joyous,” as at this period. He deliberately wrapped himself for protection, as he afterwards said, “in a species of misunderstanding.” He filled the papers with letters, each a delicately barbed little arrow, meant to hurt. London re-echoed with his laugh. His white lock stood up more defiantly above his curls ; his cane lengthened ; a series of collars sprang from the neck of the long overcoat, his hat borrowed a flatter brim, a lower tilt over his eyes ; he invented amazing costumes—“in great form, with a new fawn-coloured long-skirted frock-coat, and extraordinary long cane,” Mr. Cole found him one summer day in 1882. He allowed no break in the gossip, no pause for the town to take breath.

## THE JOY OF LIFE

The carriages brought the expected crowds, but not the sitters. Few had been eager to sit to him before the trial, now there were fewer. In the 'eighties, as M. Duret says, it needed courage to be painted by Whistler: to do so was to risk notoriety, if not ridicule. Mrs. (now Lady) Meux, was the first to give him a commission at this difficult moment, and she has been well repaid for her heroism. The two large full-lengths he painted of her are amongst his most distinguished portraits. She was handsome, of a more luxuriant type than the women who usually sat to him, her full-blown beauty a contrast to the elusive loveliness of "Maud" in the *Fur Jacket*, or of Mrs. Leyland, and to the quiet dignity of Mrs. Huth. Whistler found for her harmonies appropriate to her beauty. The first was an *Arrangement in White and Black*, which few people have seen. There is a sumptuousness in the black of the shadowy background and the velvet gown, in the white of the fur of the long cloak, that Whistler never surpassed. M. Duret, who often saw the portrait in the studio, found in it something "mysterious and fantastic"; to us, the firm modelling of the face and beautiful bare neck and arms, gives to the almost regal figure more solidity than Whistler usually tried for, and less of the spirit, the phantom, that Desnoyers, and Huysmans after him, found in Whistler's paintings of women. Whistler was pleased with it, and spoke of it as his "beautiful Black Lady." Lady Meux was so well satisfied that she at once posed for a second portrait. This time the *Harmony* was in *Flesh-Colour and Pink*, afterwards changed to *Pink and Grey*. She was once more painted standing, wearing a curious round hat low over her head and face, and a high bodice with long sleeves, cut in the ugly fashion of the day, which cannot conceal or deform the beauty of her figure.

There was a third, smaller portrait which, as far as we can find out, was never finished. Mr. Menpes has

## JAMES McNEILL WHISTLER

published the reproduction of a pen-and-ink drawing, in the possession of Mr. C. W. Dowdeswell, of Lady Meux in bonnet and coat, her hands in a muff, which may have been the study or suggestion for it. Mr. Harper Pennington, writing of this picture, says,

“The only time I saw Jimmy ‘stumped’ for a reply was at a sitting of Lady Meux (for the portrait in sables). For some reason Jimmy became nervous—exasperated—and impertinent. Touched by something he had said, her ladyship turned softly towards him and remarked, quite softly: ‘See here, Jimmy Whistler! You keep a civil tongue in that head of yours, or I will have in some one to *finish* those portraits you have made of me!’—with the faintest emphasis on ‘finish.’ Jimmy fairly danced with rage. He came up to Lady Meux, his long brush tightly grasped, and actually quivering in his hand, held tight against his side. He stammered, spluttered—and finally gasped out: ‘How *dare* you? How *dare* you?’—but that, after all, was *not* an answer, was it? Lady Meux did not sit again. Jimmy never spoke of the incident afterwards, and I was sorry to have witnessed it.”

Sir Henry Cole posed again for his portrait. Mr. Alan S. Cole saw it in the studio on February 26, 1882:

“Found his commencement of my father, good but slight, full length, evening clothes, long dark cloak thrown back, red ribbon of Bath.”

Another sitting, of which there is a note, was on April 17:

“In spite of his illness, my father to Whistler’s, who fretted him by not painting—my father thought that Jimmy had merely touched the light on his shoes, and nothing else—although he stood and sat for over an hour and a half.”

This was the last sitting. The next day Sir Henry Cole died suddenly, a distinguished official lost to England, a good friend lost to Whistler. Eldon, who was in the studio on the 17th, recalled afterwards that his last words on leaving were: “Death waits for no man!” Whistler meant to go

## THE JOY OF LIFE

on with the portrait. On May 2, Mr. Cole went again to Tite Street :

“ After a long delay, Jimmy showed me his painting of my father, which J. can make into a very good thing.”

But it was never finished. Neither was a full-length of Eldon, a friend much with him at the time. We have seen a photograph of it, a fine thing evidently, but it also has vanished, though a small version was sent to the London Memorial Exhibition, where, however, it was not hung. During the next few years, innumerable other portraits were begun, but though we have photographs of several, it is not always possible to identify them. One, an *Arrangement in Yellow*, of which he hoped great things, was of Mrs. Langtry. In another, he returned to the old scheme of “ blue upon blue.” Miss Elinor Leyland, “ Maud,” Connie Gilchrist, had stood for it ; Miss Maud Waller now succeeded them. Mrs. Marzetti, her sister, who always went with her to the studio, writes :

“ As far as I can remember, the sittings commenced in the early part of 1882. We went two or three times, and then Whistler painted the face out, as it was not to his liking, although most people thought it excellent. In those days Maud was very beautiful. The picture was started on a canvas that already had a figure on it, and it was turned upside down, and the *Blue Girl's* head painted in between the legs. The dress was made by Mme. Alias, the theatrical costumier, to Whistler's design, and I believe cost a good deal. In the end the picture was finished from another model (I do not know who), and was hung in one of Whistler's exhibitions in Bond Street : it is No. 31 in the catalogue, and called *Scherzo in Blue—The Blue Girl*. This was the same exhibition in which he hung the picture he gave me, and which in the end I never got (No. 66, *Bravura in Brown*). I should have treasured it for two reasons : Whistler's painting, and also that it was a portrait of Mr. Ridley. The picture, as Maud stood for it, was to have been in that season's exhibition at the Grosvenor Gallery, but was not finished. However, it

## JAMES McNEILL WHISTLER

was sent in for the private view, and taken away again the same night or next morning. We used thoroughly to enjoy our visits to the studio, that is to say, I did, because I sat and looked on. I can't say whether Maud enjoyed them as much, probably not, as we used to get down there about 11 o'clock, have lunch, and stay all the afternoon, most of which time she was standing.

"I cannot remember all the callers we used to see there, as there were so many; but some of the more frequent visitors I remember well. There was one man who was always there, all day long, and we just hated him: I don't know why, as he seemed very harmless. He was Whistler's shadow. I don't know who he was, but have an idea that he used to write a bit. I think he was very poor, and that Whistler pretty well kept him. I heard some few years ago that he died in a lunatic asylum. Oscar Wilde was a frequent visitor, also Walter Sickert. Whistler used to say 'Nice boy, Walter'; he was very fond of him then. Others I remember were two brothers named Story, Frank Miles (who had a studio just opposite Whistler's)—Renée Rodd as Whistler used to call him—Major Templar, Lady Archie Campbell, and Mrs. Hungerford. These were all pretty constant visitors, but there were many others whom I cannot remember. Whistler was just finishing the portrait of Lady Meux at the time, and I remember standing for him one day for about five minutes, while he put the lights in the eyes. If I remember rightly, it was a full-length portrait in black evening dress, with a big white cloak over the shoulders.

"Whistler was a most entertaining companion: he was very fond of telling us Edgar Allen Poe's stories, and also of reciting *The Lost Lenore*, which he said was his favourite poem. He dined with us several times in Lyall Street, he was always late for dinner, sometimes half an hour, and I think, on more than one occasion, was sound asleep at the table before the end of dinner.

"Whistler's usual breakfast, which he often had after we arrived at the studio, was two eggs in a tumbler, beaten up with pepper, salt and vinegar, bread and coffee. . . .

"Whistler's mode of painting was most comical: he stood yards away from the picture with his brush, and would move it as though he were painting; he would then take a hop, skip and jump across the room, and put a dab of paint on the canvas;







THE YELLOW BUSKIN (LADY ARCHIBALD CAMPBELL)

*Arrangement in Black, No. VII.*

## THE JOY OF LIFE

he also used to wet his finger, and gently rub portions of his picture. I have often seen him take a sponge with soap and water, and wash the *Blue Girl's* face (on the canvas, I mean)."

Lady Archibald Campbell, whom Mrs. Marzetti met in the studio, was a woman of great distinction and beauty, with the intelligence to see in Whistler a master. She writes us :

"He was a great friend of ours. I think I sat to him during a year or so, off and on, for a very great many studies in different costumes and poses. His first idea was to paint me in court dress. The dress was black velvet, the train was silver satin with the Argyle arms embroidered in *appliqué* in their proper colours. He made a sketch of me in the dress. The fatigue of standing with the train was too great, and he abandoned the idea. In all these studies I remember he called my attention to his method of placing his subject well within the frame, and explaining that a portrait must be more than a portrait, must be of value decoratively, that is to say, it must be decorative in purpose. He never patched up defects, but if with any portion of his work he became dissatisfied, he covered the canvas over afresh with his first impression freshly recorded. The first impression thrown on the canvas he often put away, often destroyed. Among others, he made in oil colour an impression of me as Orlando, in the forest scene of *As You Like It*, at Coombe. He considered this successful. A picture which he called *The Grey Lady* was a harmony in silver greys. I remember thinking it was a masterpiece of drawing, giving the impression of movement. I was descending the steps of a stair, the canvas was of a great height, and the general effect very striking. That picture was almost completed, when my absence from town prevented a continuance of the sittings. When I returned, he asked to make a study of me in the dress in which I called upon him. This is the picture which he exhibited under the name of *The Brodequin Jaune*, or *The Yellow Buskin*. I understand it is now at Philadelphia. As far as I remember, it was painted in a very few sittings. When I saw him very shortly before his death, I remember asking after *The Grey Lady*. He laughed, and said he had destroyed her."

## JAMES McNEILL WHISTLER

M. Duret suggests that, in the end, the ridicule of her friends had their effect on Lady Archibald Campbell, or perhaps that her beauty gave her the right to capriciousness ; anyhow, she suggested changes to Whistler, who, though he seldom accepted suggestions from his sitters, did his best to meet her wishes until it seemed as if, to please her, he must repaint his picture, and he was seized with discouragement. We have heard of a dramatic scene just outside the studio : Lady Archibald Campbell in a hansom, on the point of driving away never to return ; M. Duret springing on the step, representing to her the loss to the world of the masterpiece if she refused to stand for it again, and arguing so well that she did come back, and *The Yellow Buskin* was saved from the fate of *The Grey Lady* and *The Lady in Court Dress*. Her story of the sittings shows that her social duties, her absences from town, were the reason of apparent unwillingness. Some think the one portrait of her that was finished is Whistler's greatest. It has not only the decorative value she says he insisted upon, but great distinction in the figure and face, character in the pose as she stands there fastening her glove, and splendid colour. It is one of Whistler's several *Arrangements in Black*. Critics of the day could discover in the series only dinginess and dirt. One wit described the picture as the portrait of a lady pursuing the last train through the smoke of the Underground. Now, however, people have learned to see, or at least to know they should see, beauty and variety in Whistler's blacks and greys, and few would deny that the picture is a masterpiece of colour. Whistler exhibited it first as the portrait of Lady Archibald Campbell, but afterwards as *The Yellow Buskin*, its title in the Wilstach Collection, Philadelphia, to which it now belongs.

M. Duret was posing to Whistler at the same time. When Lady Archibald Campbell could not come, Whistler would

## THE JOY OF LIFE

telegraph for him. Almost day by day, he watched the progress of her portrait as he saw his own growing under Whistler's brush. Business brought M. Duret often to London at this time, and Whistler had no truer friend. He had always been much with artists in Paris, had been intimate with Courbet, and was still with Fantin, Manet and Bracquemond. He saw the genius of men at whom the world still scoffed. It was he, who, by his article on Whistler, in the *Gazette des Beaux-Arts*, April 1881, reprinted in *Critique d'Avant Garde* (1885), made the French realise their mistake of many years, and again give Whistler the recognition they had long denied him.

The etching of *Alderney Street* was printed with M. Duret's article in the *Gazette*, though three years earlier the editor could not "afford" Whistler's price, and Whistler regretted that he could not "afford" to be born in the *Gazette*. The absence of sitters left Whistler leisure to carry out many of his pictorial schemes. M. Duret says that one evening in 1883, after a private view, they were talking over the pictures, and in discussing the portrait of the President of some Society, Whistler decided that the red robes of office were not in character with the modern head, and that a man should be painted in clothes as modern as himself, and he asked M. Duret to come and pose to him that he might show what could be done with evening dress, the despair of painters. The experiment was not so original as M. Duret seems to think. The portrait of Leyland was done ten years before, and in it Whistler proved the truth of Baudelaire's assertion that the great colourist can get colour from materials as simple as a black coat, a white cravat or shirt, and a dark background. Sir Henry Cole also stood for him in evening clothes. Nor did Whistler rely entirely upon so simple a scheme in his portrait of M. Duret, who was made to stand with a pink domino hanging over his arm, and a red fan in 1882]

## JAMES McNEILL WHISTLER

his hand, and the portrait was an *Arrangement in Flesh Colour and Black*.

M. Duret describes Whistler at work. He marked slightly with chalk the place for the figure on the canvas, and began at once to put in his colours as they were to remain in the finished work, so that, at the end of the first sitting, the design of the portrait was seen. This was the rapid method of sketching in a full-length figure, that delighted Whistler in the *Irving*. The difficulty with him was not to begin a portrait, but to finish it. The picture was brought almost to completion, scraped down, begun again, and repainted ten times. From many of Whistler's sitters come stories of his struggles and difficulties. M. Duret, who lived much with painters, saw that it was a question not of drawing, but of colour, of tone, and understood Whistler's theory that to bring the whole into harmonious relation, and preserve it, the whole must be repainted as a whole, if there is any repainting at all, and not merely in parts. There are finer portraits, but not many that show so well Whistler's meaning when he said that colour is "the arrangement of colour." The rose of the domino, the fan, and the flesh, is so skilfully managed that it flushes the cold grey of the background with rose. M. Duret, when he shows you the picture, in his apartment at Paris, will take a sheet of paper, cut a hole in it, and place it against the background, to prove that the grey, when surrounded by white, is pure and cold, without a touch of rose, and that Whistler got his effect by his knowledge of the relation of colours, and his mastery of the tones he wished to obtain.

Whistler lost little time in showing the portraits as he finished them. His *Lady Meux*, the "beautiful Black Lady," went to the Salon of 1882, where it was catalogued as *Portrait de M. Harry—Men*, to the confusion of commentators and cataloguers ever since. The *Harmony in*



LADY MEUX  
*(Arrangement in Black and White,*



## THE JOY OF LIFE

*Flesh Colour and Pink* was shown at the Grosvenor with several other pictures. The critics were again at a loss how to take them. The *Times* was unable to decide whether Whistler was making fun of them all, or whether something was wrong with his eyes ; the *Pall Mall* regretted that

“ if the *Lady Meux* was full of fine and subtle qualities of drawing, the *Scherzo in Blue* was the sketch of a scarecrow in a blue dress without form and void. It is very difficult to believe that Mr. Whistler is not openly laughing at us when he holds up before us such a piece as this. His counterpart in Paris, the eccentric M. Manet, has at least more sincerity than to exhibit his work in such an imperfect condition.”

But Whistler now had his defenders. An “ Art Student ” wrote the next day to the *Pall Mall* to point out that

“ at the private, and therefore, presumably, the press view, *The Blue Girl* was seen in an unfinished state, having been sent there merely to take up its space on the wall. It was removed immediately, and has been since finished. Had the critic seen it since, he would hardly have called it without form and void. The want of artistic sincerity is certainly the last charge that can be brought against a man who has followed his artistic intention with such admirable and unswerving singleness of purpose.”

From this time onward, Whistler was no longer alone in fighting his battles.

1882 was the year of *The Paddon Papers*. Mr. Cole wrote on September 24 :

“ To Jimmy’s. He lent me proof of his Paddon and Howell correspondence. Amusing, but too personal for general interest.”

We agree with Mr. Cole. There were complications of no importance with Howell, in which Paddon, a diamond merchant, figured ; and further complications over the Chinese cabinet Mr. Morse bought from Whistler when he moved into  
1882]

## JAMES McNEILL WHISTLER

No. 2 Lindsey Row. For long Mr. Morse was left with only the lower part, while Howell had the top. Whistler, who thought nothing concerning him trivial, printed these letters in a pamphlet, called *The Paddon Papers ; or, The Owl and the Cabinet*, interesting now, only because it is rare, and because it marks the end of all relations between himself and Howell.

In the early winter of 1883, Whistler gave the second exhibition of his Venetian etchings at the Fine Art Society's. The prints, fifty-one in number, included several London subjects. He decorated the gallery in a scheme of white and yellow. The wall was white with yellow hangings, the floor was covered with pale yellow matting, and the couches with pale yellow serge. The few light, cane-bottomed chairs were painted yellow. There were yellow flowers in yellow pots, a white and yellow livery for the door attendant, and white and yellow Butterflies in paper and silk for his friends. It is remembered that, at the private view, Whistler wore yellow socks just showing now and then above his low shoes, and that the young assistants wore yellow neckties. He prepared the catalogue, its brown paper cover, form and size now established, and after each title he printed a quotation from his critics in the past. "Out of their own mouths shall ye judge them" was the motto on his title-page. A friend much with him at the time says that he looked over the proofs with Whistler :

"We came to 'there is merit in them, and I do not wish to understand it' [a quotation from Wedmore's article in the *Nineteenth Century*]. Jimmy yelled with joy, and thanked the printer for his intelligent misreading of *understate*. 'I think we will let that stand as it is,' he said. I was amused at the private view to see him discussing the question with Mr. Wedmore, who naturally, did not think it quite fair."

## THE JOY OF LIFE

The result was another little chapter in *The Gentle Art*. Before the end of February, the catalogue went into a third edition. We have a copy of the sixth.

Even before the show opened, it was,

“ Well, you know, a source of constant anxiety to everybody and of fun to me. On the ladder, when I was hanging the prints I could hear whispers—no one would be able to see the etchings ! And then I would laugh, ‘ Dear me, of course not ! that’s all right. In an exhibition of etchings, the etchings are the last things people come to see ! ’ And then there was the private view, and I had my box of wonderful little Butterflies, and I distributed them only among the select few, so that, naturally, everybody was eager to be decorated. And when the crowd was greatest, Royalty appeared—quite unprecedented at a private view, and the crowd was hustled into another room while the Prince and Princess of Wales went round the gallery, looking at everything, the Prince chuckling over the catalogue. ‘ I say, Mr. Whistler, what is this ? ’ he asked when he came to the *Nocturne—Palaces*. ‘ I am afraid you are very malicious, Mr. Whistler,’ the Princess said.”

Those who received the little Butterflies thought them charming. Mrs. Marzetti writes :

“ I have a few treasures which I guard most jealously ; one is the golden Butterfly that he made us wear at the private view of one of his exhibitions in Bond Street, in the original little card box in which he sent them (three, I think) to mother, with a message written on the lid, and signed with his Butterfly.”

But by the public at large everything was laughed at. The Butterflies added to the “ screaming farce,” the “ foppery ” of the whole thing. The attendant in yellow and white livery was nicknamed “ the poached egg.” The catalogue was the worst offence. Mr. Wedmore could hardly like to have it recalled that fourteen months before he had disposed of Whistler as “ years ago . . . a person of high promise,”

1883] 311

## JAMES McNEILL WHISTLER

or the gentleman of the *Athenæum* to be reminded of his earlier decision that "in Mr. Whistler's productions one might safely say that there is no culture." They tried to make the best of it by refusing to see in him anything save the jester. The *Times* compared his humour to Mark Twain's. The *Daily News* found the general effect of the show "excruciatingly agreeable." *Funny Folks* likened him to Barnum, and *Punch* agreed. The *Echo* thought his work rubbish—his last little joke was dull without being cheap. Their ridicule has become ridiculous. As for Whistler's etchings, the price of the series of *Twelve*, as of the *Twenty-Six* issued a year or so later, in which many of these prints were published, was fifty guineas; on May 27, 1908, the single print, *Nocturne—Palaces*, sold in Paris for one hundred and sixty-eight guineas.

For the large exhibitions of this year, he had no new work, but sent two of the earlier Nocturnes to the Grosvenor, and to the Salon the *Mother*, for which he was awarded a third-class medal, the first and only recompense he ever received at the Salon. In the winter of 1883–84 he worked a great deal out of doors, spending many weeks at St. Ives, Cornwall. He took no interest in landscape—"there were too many trees in the country," he always said. But he loved the sea, from the days of *The Blue Wave* at Biarritz and *The Shores of Brittany* until one of the last summers of all when he painted it at Domburg in Holland. The Cornish sketches were sent to his show of *Notes, Harmonies, Nocturnes* at the Dowdeswell's Gallery in May 1884. It was the first exhibition in which he included many water-colours. The medium had been difficult to him at first; now he was its master. He used it to record subjects as characteristic of London as the subjects of his pastels were of Venice: the little shops of Chelsea, the old church, the streets wrapped in the London atmosphere, the rows of old houses by the river. There were

## THE JOY OF LIFE

also studies and sketches brought back from an occasional journey to Holland, for he was always running about now, or from the sea-shore near London. The interest of the Catalogue this time was in the Preface, *L'Envoie* he called it. It gives the *Propositions No. 2* which have become famous: that a picture is finished when all traces of the means that produced it have disappeared; that industry in Art is a necessity, not a virtue; that the work of the master reeks not of the sweat of the brow; that the masterpiece should appear as the flower to the painter, perfect in its bud as in its bloom. He decorated the gallery: delicate rose-colour on the walls, white dado, white chairs and pale azaleas in rose-flushed jars. The Butterfly, tinted in flesh-colour like the walls, was on the card of invitation. The *Arrangement in Flesh-Colour and Grey* was as little appreciated as the *Yellow and White* in 1883, and the critics refused to see in it anything but a new affectation.

Still signs were not missing of appreciation, and when, in 1884, Whistler sent the *Carlyle* to the Loan Exhibition of Scottish National Portraits at Edinburgh, it created a deep impression. There had already been attempts to sell the picture. M. Duret tried to interest an Irish collector who, however, did not dare to buy it in the face of general hostility and ridicule. It was offered to Mr. Scharfe, director of the National Portrait Gallery in London, who not only refused to consider the offer, but laughed at the idea that such work should pass for painting at all. The first serious endeavour to secure it for a national collection came from Mr. George R. Halkett, then quite a young man, who urged its purchase for the Scottish National Gallery, in a letter to the *Scotsman* (October 6, 1884).

“SIR,—Will you give me permission to express a very widespread feeling that an effort should be made to obtain for the Scottish National Gallery the magnificent portrait of Carlyle, by  
1884] 1: x 313

## JAMES McNEILL WHISTLER

Mr. Whistler, now in the Loan Exhibition. There can be no question that a National Portrait Gallery, endowed by the generosity and public spirit of a Scotsman, should possess a portrait of one of the most eminent of Scotland's sons, and there can be as little doubt that a more faithful portrait than this of Whistler's will not readily be obtainable. Mr. Whistler's unconventional methods and personal eccentricities, perhaps even more than Mr. Ruskin's 'pot of paint' criticism, have tended unduly to discredit him in the popular estimation, and in certain varieties of his work there may be room for doubt whether he should be regarded quite seriously. But the present picture is, in truth, one of the most serious and impressive of his productions, and has been accepted as such by artists and critics. The criticism applied by Mr. Brownell in his *Scribner* article to another portrait by Whistler—that of his mother—is equally applicable here: 'in a grave dignity, not without sensibility, a quiet and almost severe grace that is full of character, it is difficult to conceive a more charming union of portraiture and picturesqueness.' At last year's Salon, Mr. Whistler was awarded a medal by a jury composed of the leading artists in Paris, and including men so eminent in their art and yet so opposite in their tendencies and methods as Bonnat, Cabanel and Bouguereau; and this year, as we learn from a competent authority in the *Magazine of Art*, this portrait of Carlyle and another exhibit were among the most popular of the pictures at the Salon. Apart from its distinctive merits as a work of art, it has been freely admitted by those who knew Carlyle well to be thoroughly faithful, as well as a most pathetic, rendering of the 'Sage of Chelsea' in his age. . . .

"It would be a great thing for Edinburgh if she were the first city in this country publicly to recognise what the art-lovers of France and America have been proclaiming for many a day, and, while encouraging Mr. Whistler's art, at the same time obtain a worthy portrait of Thomas Carlyle, himself one of the earliest and most ardent advocates of a Scottish National Portrait Gallery. Unlike the national galleries in London and Dublin we in Scotland have to depend in the meantime upon private liberality for our art treasures, and it is to be hoped, in the present instance, that this, our only resource, will not fail us."

## THE JOY OF LIFE

Mr. William Hole supported Mr. Halkett the following day :

“ The picture is one of the best examples of a master who, at his best, and within his own limits, is almost beyond criticism, and, considering the great advance in art knowledge made of late years in Scotland, there are few, I think, who have given the work careful study and thought, who will not endorse the opinion already formed by many of the best critics at home and abroad, that Whistler’s *Carlyle* is one of the noblest examples of modern portraiture, that its possession, therefore, would add lustre to any art gallery, and that its subject renders the national collection of Scotland its most fitting resting-place.”

Unfortunately, it was reported that the subscription paper disclaimed all approval of Whistler’s art and theories on the part of subscribers. Whistler was indignant. He telegraphed to Edinburgh : “ The price of the *Carlyle* has advanced to one thousand guineas. Dinna ye hear the bagpipes ? ” The price originally was four hundred, and this ended the negotiations.

Why, about this time, Whistler should have become involved in a Church Congress in the Lake Country, unless he was coming from, or going to, Scotland, we never have been able to explain. He told us about it years later, and he seemed no less amazed than we. J. was just about to start for the Lakes, and Whistler was reminded of his excursion there. We give the note made at the time, as it is :

*Sunday, September 16 (1900).*—“ Whistler dined, and Agnes Repplier—not a successful combination. The dinner dragged until E. J. Sullivan happened to come in, and Whistler woke up, and, all of a sudden, we hardly know how, he was plunged into the midst of the Lake Country and a Church Congress, travelling third class with the clergy and their families, eating jam and strange meals with quantities of tea, and visiting the Rev. Mr. Green in his prison, shut up by his bishop for burning candles,

1884] 315

## JAMES McNEILL WHISTLER

and altogether the hero and important person he would never be on coming out. An amazing story, but what Whistler was doing in the Lakes with the clergy, he did not appear to know—the story was enough.”

The one and only result of the expedition was his impression of the unpicturesqueness of the Lakes: the mountains “were all little round hills with little round trees out of a Noah’s Ark.”

END OF VOL. I.

Printed by BALLANTYNE & CO. LIMITED  
Tavistock Street, Covent Garden, London







